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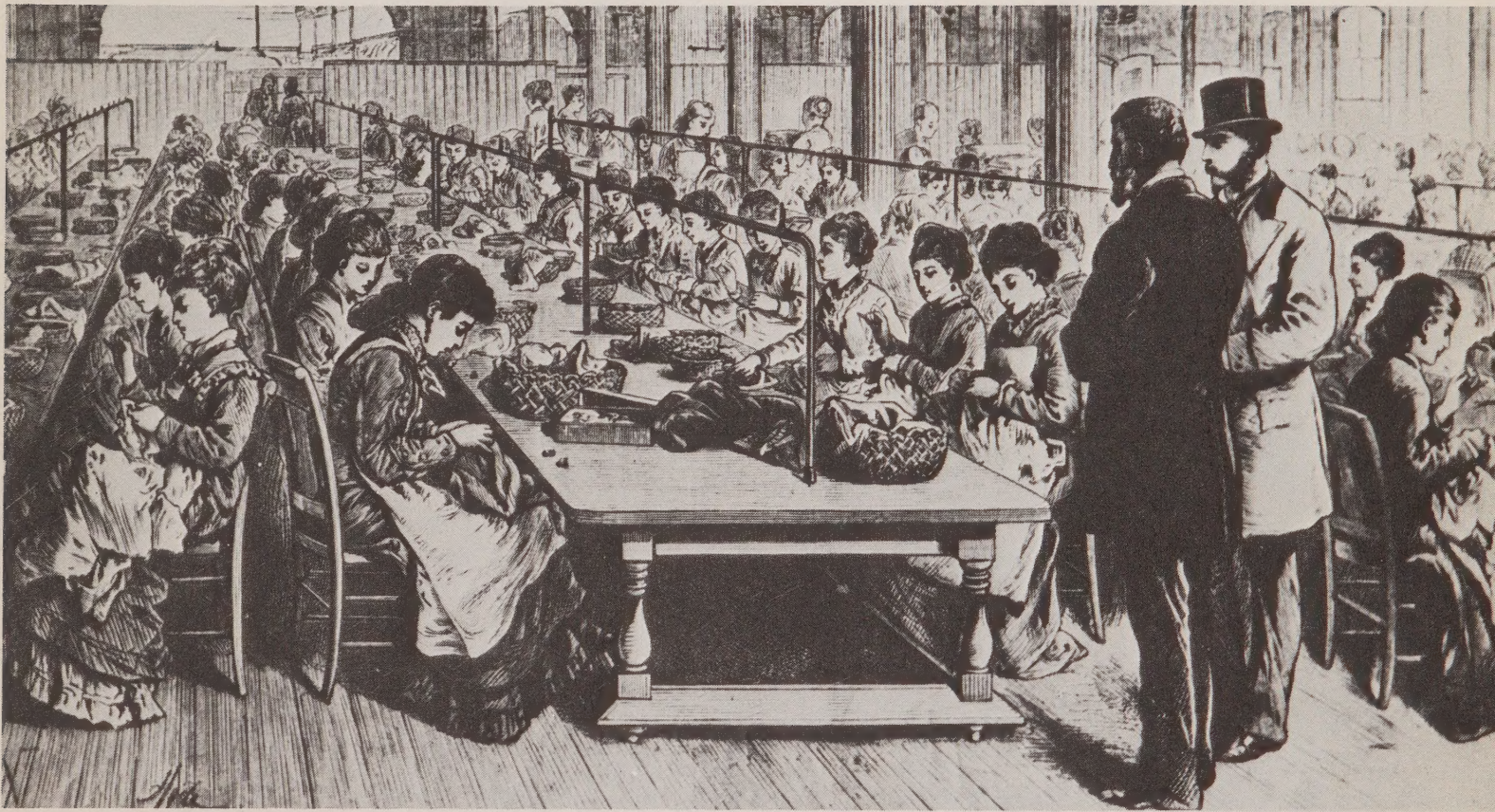
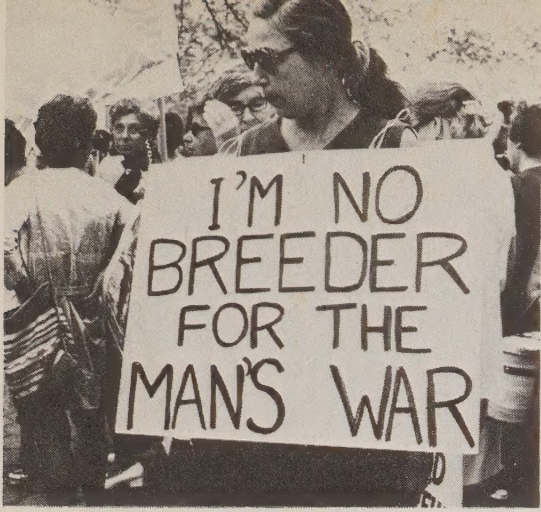
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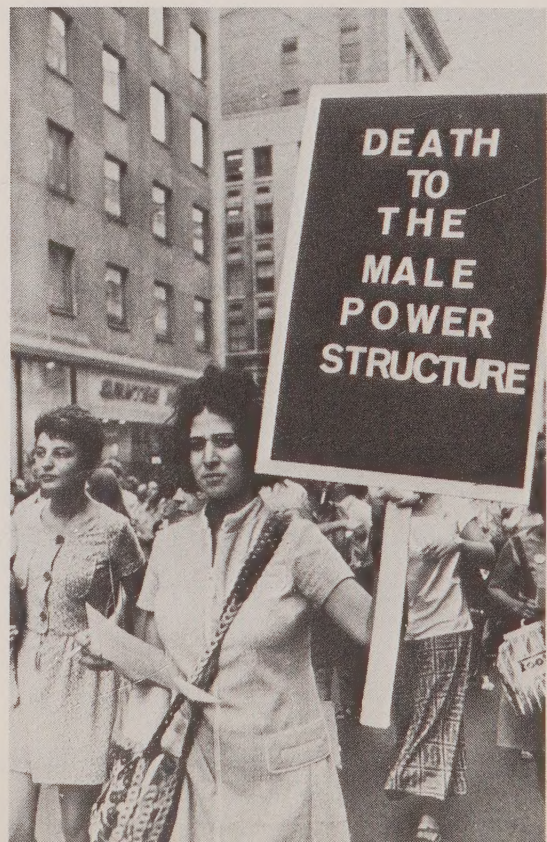
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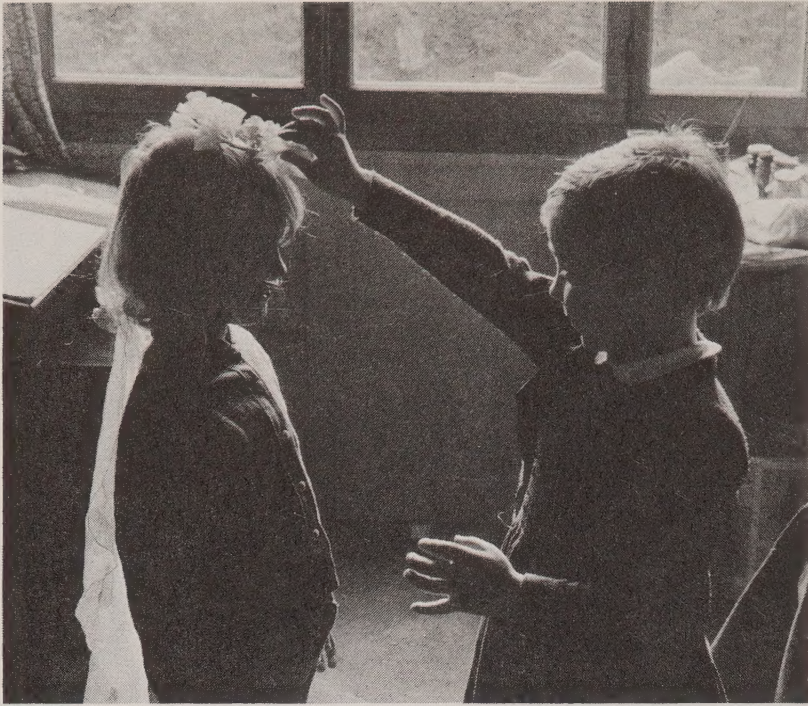


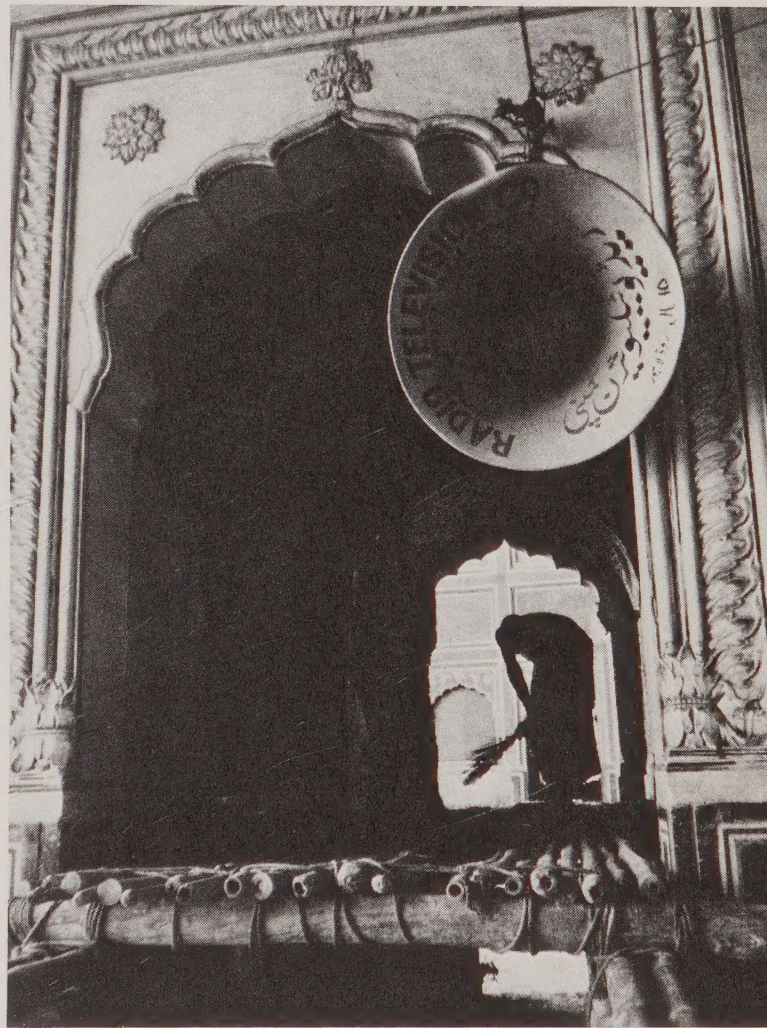
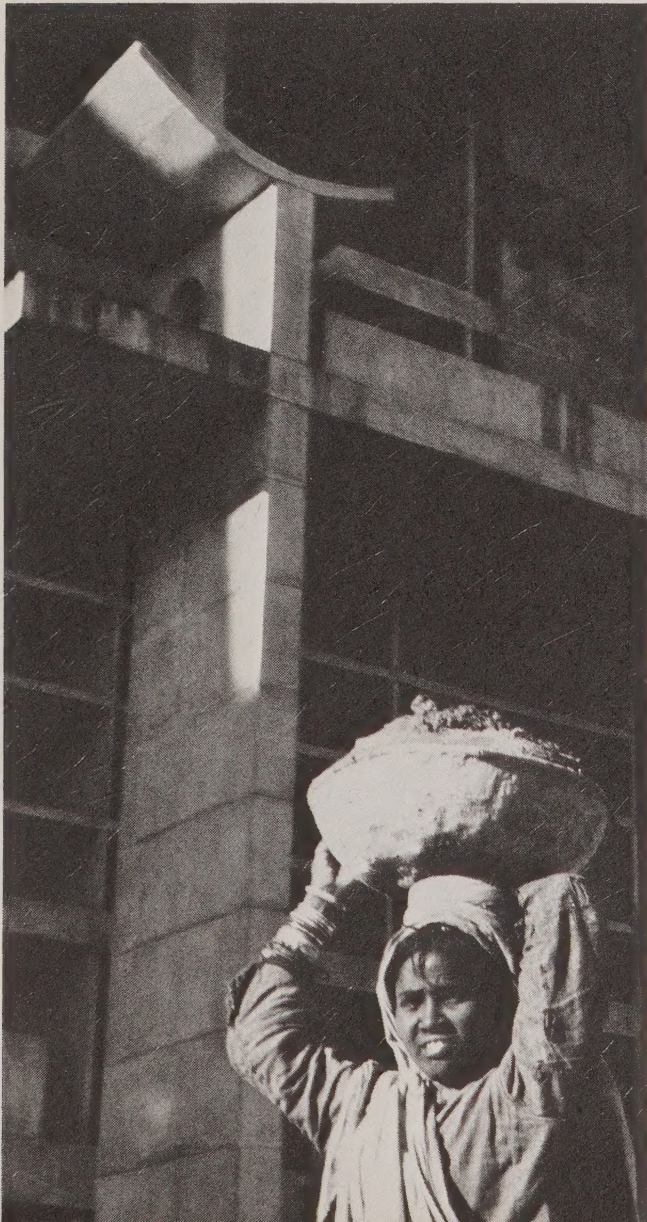
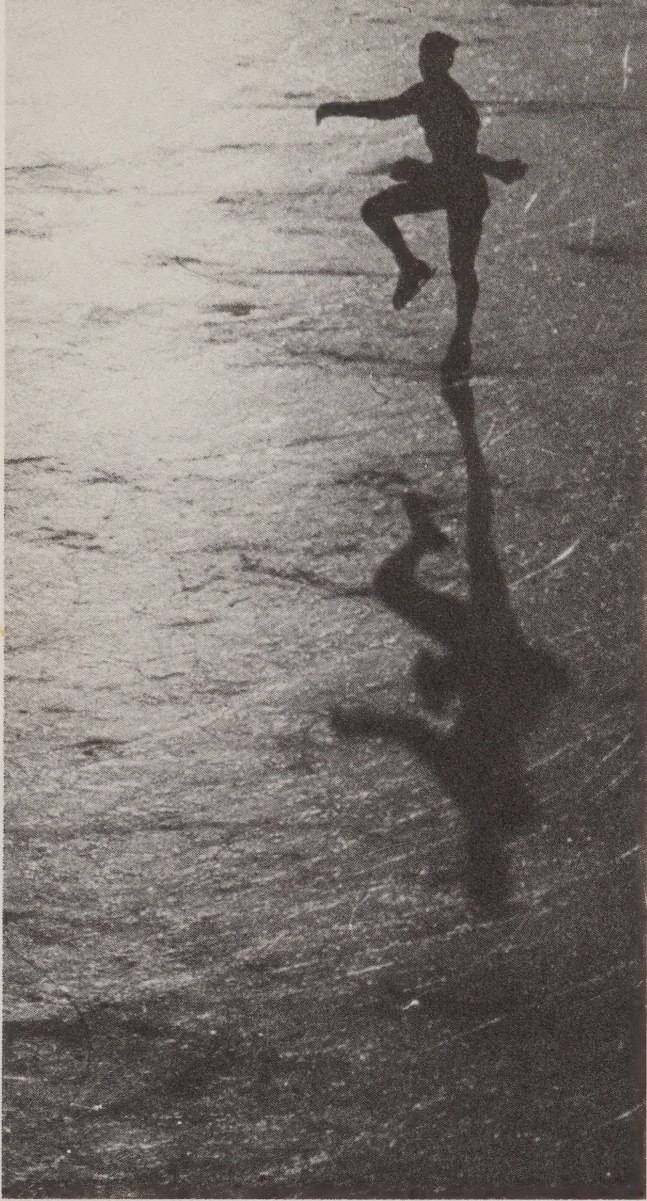




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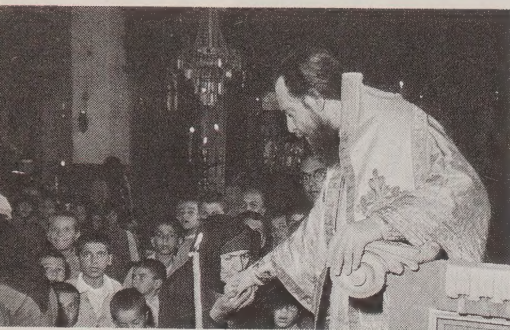


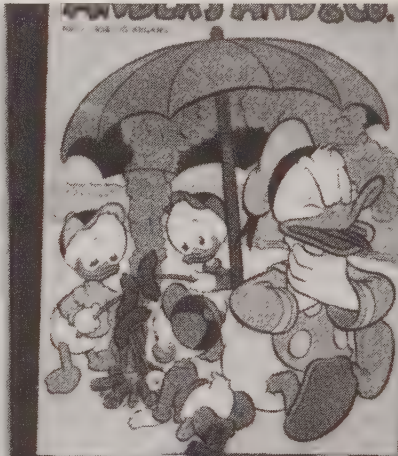
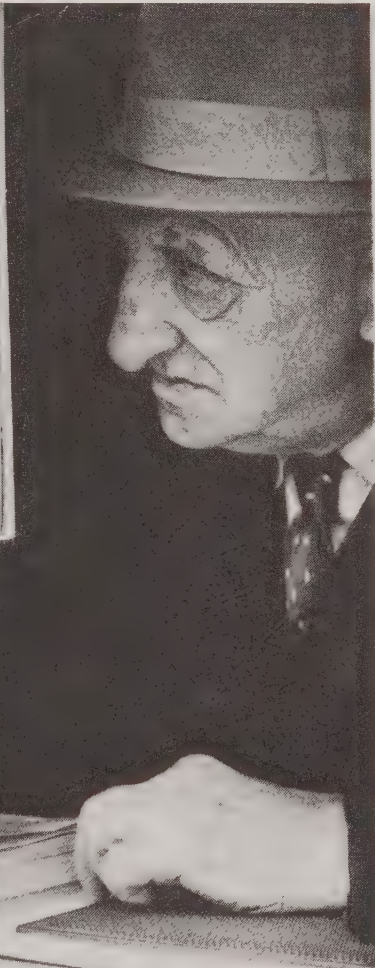






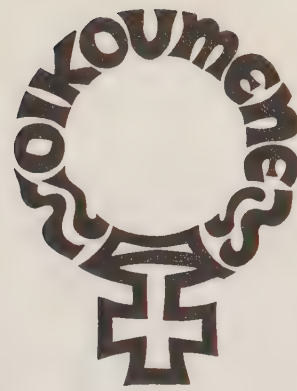






WOMEN
UNITE





Introduction

THEY WILL SAY IT IS RIDICULOUS. Surely the issues of race, development, and world peace are far more crucial? Is it not just a debate confined to a comparatively small group of middle class women in the affluent societies? Is it not just an American thing? Is it not sheer exaggeration to talk about oppressor and oppressed when referring to the relationships between men and women? That is what **they** will say.

WE COME WITH NO APOLOGIES. The answers to such questions will be as many as the attitudes to the issue. The discussion is by no means settled and will continue to create as much polarisation amongst women as it does between men and women. Yet we believe that renewal in the Church will be even more delayed if the larger portion of its membership remains at the edge of its total life and witness. At every level of the Church's life, with the exception of congregational worship, women are conspicuous by their absence. The fathers and the brothers and the sons are the dominating partners. And we believe that at a time when we hear more and more about movements of liberation for the politically and racially oppressed, there can be no liberation unless **all** are liberated.

ONE OF THE CRITICAL PROBLEMS is how the Bible is understood in this matter. In 1895 Elizabeth Cody Stanton published a series of commentaries on those parts of the Bible that refer to women: certainly if read one way the Bible can be taken as a misogynists textbook! We have not attempted a new exegesis, but **David Foy Crabtree** shows us the responsibility of the Church in defining the accepted rôle of women. And **Gabriele Dietrich** highlights some of the more damaging passages in her account of the women's movement in Holland. **Josina Machel** tells the rôle women play in the struggle for political and human liberation in her account of FRELIMO in Southern Africa, while **Laila Khaled** answers some questions about women in the Arab world. In an Unscientific Postscript, **Anna Marie Aagaard** shows how lacking in subtlety so-called subtle discrimination can be.

THE ORDINATION OF WOMEN is a question we have deliberately avoided taking up. Few, if any, Churches can muster knock-down theological arguments against it. Even in those Churches where women are ordained, women are mostly confined to certain types of ministry. Experience shows that even gaining ordination is only a paper victory. What is now needed is frankness and honesty about the reasons which exclude women from ordination or the total range of ministries.

THREAT AND PROMISE are inextricably interwoven in the question of women's liberation. Often the threat is over-emphasised: we hope the promise can be fulfilled.

WOMEN'S LIBERATION AND THE CHURCH*

by Davida Foy Crabtree

Since the first century, the church has been one of the chief oppressors of women by virtue of its hand-in-hand relationship with the world. While the Gospel affirms that Christians have a responsibility to stand over against the world when it poses its values as ultimate, yet the church has continually perpetuated the very social institutions, customs, and myths which it is called to criticize. With regard to the lives of women, the church has given rise and support to the myths of dependency and emotionality, the nuclear family system, the all-male Trinity. The values implied in these and other areas have worked to reinforce the cultural patterns which prevent women from living fulfilled lives. Thus the implications of the women's liberation movement for the church are both manifold and thoroughgoing.

In its most recent manifestation, the struggle for the release of women from

their oppression has taken on a new and radically different conceptualization. Whereas the feminists of the early twentieth century saw their endeavor to be the gaining of "rights" or "suffrage" for American women, we in the last third of that same century see our cause as "liberation."

This movement for women's liberation must be seen as striving after not merely freedom *from* oppression, but equally and simultaneously freedom *for* new ways of living and new views of ourselves as full persons. Throughout the centuries, we women have been denied the right to determine our own lives on the grounds that we must be dependent on men for food and shelter since childbearing has left us in a weakened condition. We have been Adam's rib, John's wife and Herb's daughter, sex object and little old lady; but seldom have we been allowed to be whole persons with

* From "Women's Liberation and the Church", edited by Sarah Bentley Doely, published by Association Press, 291 Broadway, New York 10007. Reprinted with permission.

The Church as an oppressor may be a hard notion to swallow, but the case to be made in connection with the rôle of women is too strong to be ignored. Biblical texts, centuries-long traditions and out-moded language models all contribute to a situation in which the Church, consciously or unconsciously, helps to identify women as second class people. Here Davida Foy Crabtree analyses some of the factors which make the Church one of the chief oppressors of women.

identities and personalities which are not rooted in another person (father, husband, child). Even less often have women been recorded in history as important and positive contributors to the building of cultures. We have been excluded from positions of authority and of power, from restaurants and voting booths, from pulpits and cockpits. And we ask why. At this point in history, as humans, we are technologically able to control our own lives. No longer can men point to our bodies and excuse their crude ascendancy thereby, for in this century men have unwittingly provided the key for women's liberation: no longer must we bear unlimited numbers of children, and thereby confine ourselves to restricted participation in society. With increasing technologization, physical strength is a criterion for employment in few fields. Indeed, it often happens that the wife and mother who is at home all day exerts much more physical strength than does her husband at his work in office or factory.

It is this image and stereotype of woman as weak, dependent, hyper-emotional, and nonintellectual which the women's liberation movement calls into question. The oppression of women in American society today is not limited to employment discrimination. On the contrary, sexism, like racism, so pervades our social structure, myths and categories that the success of our movement will result in a radical transformation of every aspect of our personal and collective lives. Thus, we assert that we must be freed from the cultural mentality which makes women sexy second-class citizens, the same mentality which claims that anatomy is destiny. In short, women in the women's liberation movement are in battle against those definitions of women that make us objects, seen as existing either on a pedestal or in the gutter — as the church would have it, either as the Virgin Mary or as Gomer. (Hosea 1:3)

It is precisely in the rebellion against conformity to the cultural norm that women have begun to be most articulate about their hopes, ideals, and goals for the future. While the movement may appear to the casual observer as having a purely negative thrust, in fact its orientation is constructive and full of hope. At the same time that these women are criticizing society, they are setting up models for new life styles through collectives, communes, and child-care centers. The principal aim is provision of a variety of options from which women can choose at any given point in their lives. Presently young girls do not really have a choice when they confront their own futures. The great majority of them are living in homes and communities where the "normal" woman spends all of her time at home caring for husband and children. If she works, it is regarded as temporary, and she is "only doing it for the family." There is only disdain and pity for any woman in the commu-

nity who has remained single. One need only think of the different connotations of the terms *spinster* and *bachelor* to provide a graphic example of the vast difference in futures open to women and to men.

In the past, women have found themselves cut off from each other either through physical isolation in the single-family home or through an inbred distrust of other women which stems from the early days of competitive dating and education. Today, many are beginning to challenge these self-images by gathering in small, disciplined groups which meet regularly to share the profound experiences and thoughts which are part of their everyday lives as women. Those who have been part of such groups, known to them as collectives and familiar to us in the church as cell groups, have testified to their power in helping women overcome their fear and distrust of each other and themselves. Beyond that, such an experience has time and again revealed to individuals and groups that it is through our alienation from each other that we have been kept powerless. Conversely, participants in these groups have learned that it is not only possible but necessary for women to assert themselves collectively in society in order to overturn the "masculine" cultural values which presently predominate. Indeed, those values cannot be changed without first changing the societal institutions and structures which reinforce and mold attitudes. Recognizing that the women's liberation movement is for the most part in a dangerously personalistic phase at this time, yet we assert that such a stage is necessary to

alert women to the issues and to weld a strong solidarity. From here we will move to more intense political action.

Thus the ideal society projected by women's liberation would be one in which women faced an open future in a cultural setting which enhanced their self-image and assured them of an identity in their own right. As a society, we would be co-operative rather than competitive. The cultural stereotypes of what is masculine and what is feminine would be eradicated and replaced by a new understanding of what is human. Menial tasks and decision-making power and responsibility would be shared so that all would participate in meaningful work. Social structures would be so transformed as to encourage the participation of all at every level of society.

While the women's liberation movement is a struggle for the release of all women *to* new life as well as *from* the present oppressive structures, it has an important concomitant: the liberation of men from their own iron-clad role definitions which do not permit them to express emotion, to enjoy art, literature, music, or to engage in tasks like sewing, cooking, and child care without their "masculinity" being called into question. A culture which traps men in the rat race of competition for money, job, and sexual reputation is equally as oppressive of men as it is of women whom it coerces to be selfless in the most profound and devastating sense. The goal of the movement in this regard is a cultural affirmation of the best of both worlds: the integration within any individual *and* the larger society of the selfless and selfish aspects of human life so

Before women can be ordained as Anglican priests they must be accepted as persons in leadership rôles.

Archbishop Edward W. Scott,
Primate of Canada

that all can achieve full personhood.

The present expressions of the women's liberation movement have as many forms as there are forms of oppression. A few examples are: the Media Women, who are concerned with the image of woman propagated by the mass media and with the employment of women in that field; Federally Employed Women, concerned with equal employment opportunities; the National Organization for Women, primarily professional women concerned with discrimination; and a variety of other groups, mostly of a radical political nature, such as Bread and Roses in Boston, Redstockings in New York, and others across the country called simply "Women's Liberation." Yet even with the vast spectrum of militancy and tactics represented, the groups have for the most part settled on major areas of agreement as to the principal immediate goals. We will merely enumerate them.

First, the provision of child-care facilities available to all women regardless of their employment, economic, or marital status. Such centers to be open twenty-four hours a day and staffed by both men and women who are qualified and enthusiastic about their work.

Second, the provision of courses in self-defense to enable all women to defend themselves against attack and coincidentally to keep women physically fit.

Third, the repeal of all abortion laws which do not allow a woman the right to the control of her own body.

Fourth, the revision of our history texts, courses, and so on, to include the contributions of women.

Governing Boards. We urge that the experience of women should be further utilised for the central life of the Church through their inclusion in Church courts, committees, and boards, where policy is framed and decisions affecting Church life as a whole are made. We look to the World Council of Churches and the national Christian councils to give a lead in this direction, by the appointment of qualified women as members of their committees and as staff members in responsible posts.

Report of Committee IV, Concerns of the Churches,
The First Assembly of the World Council of Churches,
Amsterdam, 1948.

The Present Role of Women in the Church

Having examined the major directions of the women's liberation movement, let us turn now to a consideration of the image of woman projected by the church in its accumulated tradition. We must begin with a brief perusal of present denominational and local structures, for these necessarily reflect the institutional church's beliefs regarding women.

In local congregations, women are usually found in limited numbers on governing boards. Their responsibility is usually seen to be on Flower and Music committees, as Deaconess (an office which usually bears no real resemblance to that of Deacon) and Church School teacher. While women do comprise the large majority of active church members and are the sustaining force in almost every congregation, they have virtually no power within its structure, which is usually dominated by male clergy and church officers. As in the larger society, they are viewed as helpers for the men, with their only real talent seen to be in aesthetic matters or in working with children.

On the national staff of our denominations, it is almost impossible to find a woman executive outside the women's department. Occasionally we find a token woman in the Department of Christian Education, but even there she is a second-level executive. In the case of both staff and board or agency membership (denominational or ecumenical) the excuse often given is that clergy are needed in those positions, for they are the "leaders" of the

church. Without even questioning the theology of ministry implicit in such a statement, one is still astounded at the view of woman represented there. Even those denominations which ordain women still do not consider them for higher positions. One major reason is that these women are located for the most part in small country churches which are not taken seriously by those in power. When they seek positions in city churches or in nonparochial situations, they are not given substantial support by their fellow clergy, seminaries, or national offices.

Thus it is apparent that the contemporary church's view of woman is that she is an aesthetically-minded, child-centered individual who has no talent for or interest in ordained ministry, administration, or policy-making positions.

The Tradition Behind the Role

Now let us examine our Christian theology and history to gain some clue as to what it is that has placed woman in her secondary position and has continued to reinforce that position for centuries. We will only briefly point to some of the most obvious questions to be raised. For a more profound and extensive analysis, the reader should consult Dr. Mary Daly's *The Church and the Second Sex* (Harper and Row, 1968).

The particular models which the church has lifted out of the Bible to represent women are invariably those of the temptress who leads man to his fall (Eve) or the unattainable ideal who combines both virginity and motherhood and who acquiesces at every turn to the male (Mary). In each of these cases, the church has chosen

to emphasize certain parts of the biblical story and to ignore others. For instance, would not our image of woman differ radically from the present if the emphasis had been on either the creation story from Genesis 1 which affirms that "God created man in his own image... male and female he created them," or if Genesis 2, on the fact that by eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, humanity was plunged into history rather than into sin *per se*?

Protestants have seldom taken a good look at the Virgin Mary as part of their heritage. For the most part, a fear of adulation has taken precedence over an interest in the imagery of woman. However, such a study is necessary, particularly at this juncture in history when women are becoming increasingly aware of their historical identity. There are many facets to Mary's personality and character, although the church has usually recognized only the simplest, that of a mother who adores her son. The theological possibilities inherent in taking Mary from the pedestal to which she has been chained and viewing her as a fully human, complex person are manifold. Luke indicates at several points that Mary was a profound, intelligent and assertive person. He relates her questioning her conception, her deep faith-response to that situation, and at least twice refers to her taking things to heart or pondering particular events. While we are told relatively little about Mary, that which we do know can hardly be interpreted as a woman who found her entire identity in the fact of her motherhood or in the person of her son. Indeed, she must be seen as a strong yet compassionate individual who was able to

I am not against freedom for women but I believe that the Bible teaches that women have a rôle (that of wife and mother), that it is a noble rôle, a God-given rôle, and they will be happiest, most creative... and freest... when they accept that rôle.

Dr. Billy Graham



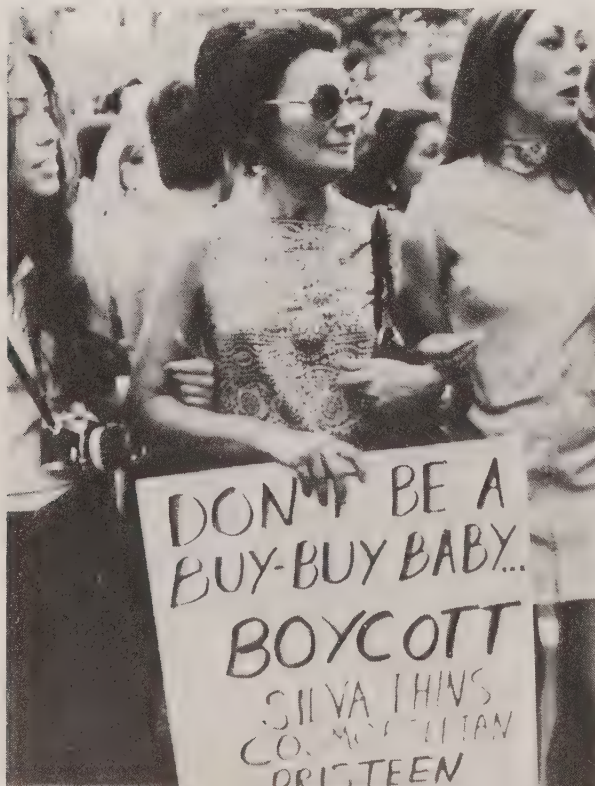
transcend her era's concept of woman as mother and homemaker. But the church has clung to its male-oriented understanding with a tenacity which can sometimes lead one to the conclusion that women should leave the present church structures and form their own church which would be more faithful to the true intent of Christ's life and teachings.

More attention should also be given to the fact that Jesus never made any explicit statement about women. Rather he demonstrated his attitude by his treatment of women like Mary Magdalene whose life of prostituting herself to men was transformed to a life of full personhood by her contact with Jesus and by his affirmation of her as a person. Theologians today who affirm that the New Testament must be examined in historical perspective and cultural context also affirm that in not urging women to take an active part with him, Jesus was facing the political realities of the day. The cultural blinders of first-century Palestine were such that the inclusion of women would probably have meant failure of his work. No competent theologian today takes the

Pauline statements about women as prescriptive for the twentieth century. Our theological language has clearly been developed by male theologians. One would be foolish to dispute the use of the masculine pronoun to refer to Jesus. Let it suffice to point out that his message, his style, his whole point was to open up life to people, in part by freeing them from "given," inescapable definitions and concepts of themselves. However, the use of the same pronoun to refer to God and to the Holy Spirit *must* be disputed. Even if we were to accept the convenient excuse that the language provides no alternative (recognizing that to opt for "she" would be as dehumanizing for men as "he" is for women), we must still question the "Father" image. One of the most valuable contributions to theology has been made by Christian Scientists: the concept of Mother-Father God. Yet, even this fails to solve our problems, however, as this symbol for the deity carries the restricting connotations our culture gives to mothers and fathers.

Historically, women have been disregarded, worshipped, or written off as fanatics with no great contribution

to make to Christian life. Rather than attempt to scan two thousand years of history in a few pages, let us for a moment take a case in point: Anne Marbury Hutchinson, who was born in England in 1590, banished from the Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1637, and died in what is now New York State in 1645. Historians have discredited Mrs. Hutchinson for over 300 years as a religiously fanatical woman who could not grasp the theological subtleties inherent in Puritan orthodoxy. Yet when we examine the primary sources (transcripts of her court and church trials, journals, correspondence), bearing in mind that all that is recorded came from her theological and political enemies, we are struck by the fact that historians have probably misunderstood her and her cause. A sympathetic reading of these sources sees her as a warm, intelligent, articulate person who was more understanding of her fellow colonists than the clergy, and who developed a theology capable of responding to their needs. She was no more religiously fanatical than anyone else of her time; indeed, in her ability to respond to people's needs and yet to stand within the Christian faith and tradition, it may be claimed that she was a greater Christian and lesser fanatic than any of her rigidly orthodox opponents.



This example can provide us with an insight into the treatment by historians of women in general or particular. It must be recognized, of course, that it is not merely church historians who have been guilty of this neglect and subjectivity. For instance, how many have heard of the Grimké sisters, Harriet Tubman, or Phoebe Palmer?

The Contemporary Church Perpetuates the Tradition

Turning to the church's involvement in the larger society, we note that the church presently, in subtle as well as direct ways, provides the underpinnings for the maintenance of the nuclear family system. In a time when social scientists are sharply aware of the fact that as presently structured the family cannot survive, one would expect the church to be seeking new directions for our life together. In point of fact, the church has seldom uttered a word of criticism directed at the family. One major cause of the breakdown of the family in America today is the way the family structure has exploited women. Society dictates that women are to fulfill themselves through husband and children, to give all of their time to their family without regard for themselves. They are to be married to the house and the work there. (What other meaning can the term *housewife* have?) And the church reinforces that mandate. Women everywhere have had to find their own ways to escape this situation. Divorce, alcoholism, and drugs are only some of the destructive symptoms of this deeply rooted malaise. The women's liberation movement seeks to join women together in the fight to end the suppression of women's creativity and consciousness.

The church understands its role in the community as a cementer of the family: "The family that prays together stays together." It is a marriage- and family-oriented institu-

acquisition of things. Never has it spoken out about the degradation and exploitation of women in advertising. Little has been done to provide women encouragement and opportunities to find self-fulfillment in employment outside the home, and even less has been done to find new styles of living for families.

Many people are beginning to realize that the problems of our nation and the world will not be solved until we find the resources to deal with the issue of sexism, the myth of male supremacy. Not only has one-half of our population been denied the right and power to participate in our society, but in that deprivation, the life-giving values have also been denied. Our culture designates certain values, such as aggressiveness, competitiveness, and rationality, to the male, and others, such as compassion, cooperation, and nurture, to the female. Consequently, when one sex is excluded from participation, the values do not take root in the culture. Thus the present movement is an attempt to restore those neglected human values to their place. It is only through such restoration that humanity will be able to conquer the evils of war, racism, poverty, and pollution.

And, finally, it is only by the coming to consciousness of women in the church that there can be hope for the church's mission. It is not possible for the church to act with all its strength

if more than half its membership is suppressed. Since women are the sustaining force in our churches, it is probable that the coming to consciousness of church women would result in the radicalizing of the church as a whole. If women were to recognize the ways in which both church and culture work together to limit their creativity and, indeed, their very life, they would rise up and confront clergy, retailers, deacons, insurance executives, and husbands every time they tried to say that God is a Father, that make-up is beautiful, that men's lives are worth more and are more important than women's.

If the church were to be radicalized — that is, returned to the fundamental ground of the Gospel, and to a critical stance against the institutions and false myths of the world — then it would find itself more alive and more at work than it has been since the Resurrection. We assert that the only means to accomplish this task is through the liberation of women and the setting free of those life-giving values which are chained to woman's pedestal.

Thus, church women throughout the world have a responsibility to work at this task, to begin with that institution closest to them, to radicalize it and to give it new life, and thereby change the very nature of the society in which we live, so that this can no longer be called a man's world.

On Sunday, 7th February, 1971 621,403 Swiss men supported giving the vote to women, with 323,596 against.

FRELIMO * (*The Mozambique Liberation Front*) has the active participation of women in its liberation struggle. This has meant a re-defining of the rôle of women and work at overcoming old prejudices. In this article Josina Machel traces the discovery and growth of the contribution of women to the movement.

REVOLUTIONARY WOMEN

by Josina Machel

It was in October, 1966, in a meeting of the Central Committee, that FRELIMO decided that the Mozambican woman should take a more active part in the struggle for national liberation, at all levels. It was decided that she should receive political and military training in order to make her more capable of fulfilling whatever tasks the revolution might demand of her. Thus, a few months later, in the beginning of 1967, the first group of women from Cabo Delgado and Niassa began their training. At first this was merely an experiment to discover just what contribution women could make to the revolution – how they would use their initiative, whether they were in fact capable of fulfilling certain tasks. The “experiment” proved highly successful and this first group of women became the founder-members of the women’s detachment, and were scattered throughout the interior each with her specific assignment. It was soon discovered that they could play a very important role both in the military and political fields, but especially in the latter.

One of the prime functions of a women’s army is, quite naturally, just like the men’s army, participation in combat. In Mozambique the women’s military activities are usually concentrated in the defence of the liberated areas, thus freeing the men for the offensive actions in the zones of advance. However, many of the women prefer more active combat in the advance zones and choose to fight alongside the men in ambushes, and mining operations, where they have proved themselves as capable and courageous as any of their male comrades. As another

* For more information about FRELIMO (*Frente de Libertacao de Mozambique*) the first of a series of Profiles on liberation movements fighting racism, prepared by the Secretary for Research of the WCC Programme to Combat Racism, is recommended. This can be had from the WCC Publications Office.

aspect of this function, we have also women working in the Department of Security constantly on the look-out for enemy infiltration.

Although highly effective in the field of combat, their contribution has been less noticeable (just because of their relatively small numbers compared with the men) than their activities in the political field, where their impact has been far out of proportion to their numbers. Since 1967 the women have demonstrated that they have a key role in the mobilisation and political education of both the people and the soldiers themselves. In this work we explain to the people the need to fight, what kind of struggle we are waging, with whom we fight, and against whom, what are the reasons for our struggle, what are our aims, and why we chose an armed struggle as the only means to independence. We explain the work we are doing and the results we have achieved so far. We explain how we are dependent to a certain extent on foreign aid and which countries and organisations are helping us, and that, despite this help, we must be as self-reliant as possible.

In this connection, it is stressed that the success of the revolution depends on the combined efforts of everyone such that no one can be omitted, and thus the traditional rather "passive" role of women must be changed so that their abilities are used to the full. Women are encouraged to give their opinions in meetings, to participate in the various committees, etc. Here we have the rather difficult task of fighting old prejudices that women's functions should be confined to cooking, rearing children, etc. It has been proved that we women can perform this task of mobilisation and education better than the men for two reasons. Firstly, it is easier for us to approach other women, and secondly, the men are more easily convinced of the important role of women when confronted with the unusual sight of confident and capable female militants who are themselves the best examples of what they are propounding. However, our activities are directed equally at the men and the presence of emancipated women bearing arms often shames them into taking more positive action.

In order to achieve self-sufficiency in the liberated areas, we explain to the people that agricultural production must be increased, not only for themselves but also to help feed the army, as the first duty of the guerrillas is fighting and thus they cannot always cultivate enough to supply their bases. We also need extra supplies to assist our comrades in the zones of advance where the constant military activity and the presence of enemy troops make regular agricultural production difficult. There is no question of persuading the people to participate in the war effort but the political basis and implications of the revolution have to be explained, and while well aware that they themselves have certain important responsibilities in the struggle, they need guidance as to which particular fields they should work in. Once the people are fully

aware of the situation they act without hesitation. In addition to increasing agricultural output, they help transport the sick and wounded, help care for the sick, help transport war material and organise themselves into militants.

In addition to its political work, the women's detachment also has extensive duties in the field of social welfare. We assist and give comfort to families who have lost relatives in the war. This is extremely delicate work requiring a great deal of patience. We also run the FRELIMO orphanage, which not only cares for orphans, but also children separated from their parents due to the war. Some of our women are trained in first aid so that they can help the medical assistants in the health centres. Many of our women are also working in the Department of Education in their literacy campaigns and in the primary schools. Here again we have to overcome the outdated prejudices of fathers and husbands regarding the idea of education for women. But we are gradually winning the battle for they realise that a literate and educated woman can make a far more constructive contribution to the revolution than an ignorant one. We now have many girls in our schools, some of whom have female teachers, and some of these girls are already participating in literacy campaigns for the older people.

Thus, apart from its strictly military functions the women's detachment has important political duties on two levels. At one level it is charged with the mobilisation and education of the people, to increase the effectiveness of their participation by developing their political understanding of the war. This we do for everyone, irrespective of sex, although we have a unique opportunity to reach our own sex that is denied to our male comrades. Once this has been achieved, we work at the next level of encouraging even more active participation by inviting people to follow our example, to leave their homes and train as fighters, nurses, teachers, etc. In this way the size of the women's detachment has increased considerably since that first experimental group and the point has now been reached where some of those first recruits have gained enough experience and knowledge so that they can become political and military trainers for their own detachment, and also assist their male colleagues in the bases to instruct elements of the population.

At the meeting of the Central Committee in April 1969, it was decided that the Mozambican Women's League (LIFEMO) should be completely fused with the women's detachment and we are still in the process of integrating into the army all the activities formerly carried on by LIFEMO. During its existence LIFEMO did some useful work but with the development of the struggle, the demands of the war inevitably required that all its efforts be concentrated inside Mozambique and hence be conducted by the women's detachment in the interior.

Threat



Kiran Daniel Louise Bigwood Pamela Gruber Brigalia Bam David Jenkins

Photos: John Fulton

Taking part were Brigalia Bam, a South African working over several years with women's groups in the Churches, Pamela Gruber, another Executive of the World Council of Churches working for World Youth Projects, Louise Bigwood, a young woman working in Geneva, Kiran Daniel from India, a mother of two children, now living in Geneva with her family and David Jenkins, Director of the Humanum Studies of the World Council of Churches.

The discussion was recorded in Geneva on February 14th, 1971.

and Promise

*How do people deal creatively with the question of women's liberation?
This question is one of several which arose in this discussion.*

BRIGALIA David, how do you see your Humanum studies work in relation to the question of women's liberation?

DAVID Well, I wonder just how far women's liberation is special. The central and most essential point that I find myself coming back to again and again as I try to pick up the threads of this study about what is happening to the human is what I might call *the threat and the promise of people who are different from me*. It seems to me that the history of the human race is very much, sadly, a history of domination instead of sharing. You get people who force other people into a situation of dependence. Now, for some reason, there is a great thrust towards liberation and independence to be yourself; I am inclined to think that the upsurge about women's liberation is one, perhaps eventually the greatest, example of this. What we have got to find out is how we can enable people who have been forced into dependence to grow and establish their independence so that we can then work towards a really human inter-dependence. I hope that doesn't sound too clever. The great thing about women's liberation is that it terrifies all men and therefore you have got this tremendous problem: how do you deal creatively with the sort of terror that is created?

PAMELA Yes, I think that sums it up very well. Many of the women in the women's liberation movement say this movement is about the liberation of men, as well as of women. Where I get very depressed is how society, from almost the day babies are born, forces them into

their rôle, whether boys or girls. One of the American denominations has done a very interesting study on their kindergarten curriculum showing how the little girls are always portrayed as shy and timid: "Mary is sitting quietly in the corner; Mary wonders if anyone will remember it's her birthday", whereas John is always running off and playing with the boys and right in amongst everybody. There is a whole conditioning, certainly in Western society, for people to be set in their sex rôles from the day they are born. How do you ever cut across that and get into a new situation?

BRIGALIA The difficulty that arises here is the minute you bring up the question of children and the home, you touch on the question of identity. And there is a reaction from psychologists, mainly, that this identity is necessary at a certain age for children either to identify themselves with their mother or father. They maintain that we might have some very serious psychological problems if there is a loss of identity. They say children have to identify with someone in order that they look up to someone. The normal thing is, of course, that a boy looks up to his father and the girl to the mother.

KIRAN I was just thinking how much more this seems to be a dilemma for people in Western society, rather than among Asians. For instance, take Vietnam: the Vietnam armies have had women generals for hundreds of years. It has never been a problem to them. And, you know, they take their place side by side with the men and they are equal and the men look up to them. Even in the present talks in Paris, the Provisional Revolutionary Government of South Vietnam's leader is a woman, the number two is a woman, and there doesn't seem to be any discrimination.

DAVID I think this may tie in with something I was just thinking about as Brigalia was talking – the forming of an identity on one partner of the pair, either father or mother, will be all the more stereotyping, won't it, if the pair is not really a co-operative pair anyway? I mean, if forming your identity on one of them, male or female, is automatically exclusive of your relationship with the other one. Perhaps I am not making this very clear, but it seems to me that one of the things that is actually being demanded by this question raised in the form of women's liberation, is a finding of a much more co-operative way of being human. If there is much more sharing between men and women in, shall we say, the life gaining rôle – earning your living or getting your food – then that might easily be connected with the fact that it isn't, therefore, odd to have a man or a woman doing a job like generals or any other, because society has more co-operative elements in the beginning. One of the questions to ask might be just how far the form in which this is hitting us is a Western form?



LOUISE I would like to ask a question at this point. This difference in Asia, in Vietnam for example, or in modern China, which I think is similar: Is this one form of liberation for women, or is it minimising the difference between the sexes? In other words, is it particularly something which concerns women, as such, or something quite different, outside the fact of sex altogether?

KIRAN I don't think it is a conscious thing. I think it is just taking for granted that if such and such a person has the potential, then one must acknowledge that, and not say, "You are a

woman and therefore your position is in the home."

LOUISE In that case, this is something quite different from what we have in the West.

KIRAN I think so – the Vietnam situation is purely a cultural thing. I mean they have had it for hundreds and hundreds of years, long before people in the West ever started thinking about it.

LOUISE I don't think that we in the West ever thought about it and are still not thinking about it.

KIRAN Well, it seems a more conscious thing now than it was before.

DAVID What would you say, Brigalia, about the position in African cultures known to you on this co-operation between men and women?

BRIGALIA Well, we have evolved out of, I would say, two distinct kinds of histories – perhaps different from Asia. Our own culture was not all that tied up with what I would call African religions. But if you look back to Africa before we were exposed to other religions or to the



Western way of life, men and women had very distinct rôles. I would say that one of the advantages we had over men was that we were mothers, and life and motherhood in the African culture automatically gave you higher status. When it came to war it was important for women to make the decisions about war as much as for men. But then if you look, for instance, at the whole question of who was the bread winner, we didn't use economy as the Western people understand it, so we didn't have this very distinct rôle of the bread winner being a man. I would say in some ways that this was what protected us. Our status was just as high as men's status. You have to look at it within that context, culture and time in history, because we were then just as much providers as men. If you look at our history of African magic or witchcraft, whatever terminology people use, women were supposed to be those who had more power for spirits. We could participate just as much as men did in any of the celebrations or any of the ancestor worship. But then, when we came into contact with the West, economy had such a strong influence that it immediately made the status of all men higher than us. Of course, Christianity, I think, also helped. I wouldn't say it was totally the culprit in terms of the status of women for it has some very strong contradictions within it in terms of men and women; thus it did elevate the position of women, in some ways, so that we are in a kind of situation where we are neither/nor.

PAMELA The point is often made that Christianity and capitalism, together, are two of the main ideologies that oppress women and discriminate against women. I think that one can argue that this is a wrong understanding of theology – reading things into Christianity as a religion that aren't necessarily there, but they happen to suit the capitalist ideology, if you like. I think that capitalism is almost bound to make women second class citizens.

DAVID I think this is a terribly important point for two reasons – First, this whole approach of what a particular point of view of economy and economics does to people, and how it turns what are properly distinctive rôles into inferior and superior rôles and, secondly, the way Western Christianity has taken on the colour of the culture



and capitalism. Now that we are back into a much more multi-cultural situation, there is the great possibility of what I would call the liberation of Christianity here, as well. But I think this question about economics is a very important one. How far is it true that distinctive rôles don't automatically confer inferiority, so to speak, outside the Western, capitalist approach to things? — or are we being romantic about it? Indeed, are we romanticising the position of women? Is the domination of woman original sin, or is it an invented sin — has it come later? I suppose we don't know enough about it to be sure, although a plausible case is being put up by the Asians and Africans for saying that it is an invented sin.

LOUISE Of course, I think that in both Christianity and capitalism we are dealing with a too vertical structure — there is somebody at the top, so there has to be somebody at the bottom, too, both in superiority and in inferiority.

DAVID Well, yes, as Christianity has been culturally mediated in the West it has become a vertical structure, but whether biblically speaking it is a vertical structure or an organic structure, is quite another matter. It seems to me that in all these discussions, including this one about women (and this is another point that I feel I've picked up in the Humanum studies), the really important thing is *what they can set us free for now*, and diagnosis as to the cause is secondary — I mean, we want to find out the diagnoses in order that we may be set free and this seems to me the line. But perhaps this is simply my being masculine and defensive — the line that we want to find with regard to this matter of women's liberation is what does it set us *all* free for. Though we must be absolutely realistic and say that, of course, it will cause all sorts of trouble on the way.

BRIGALIA It seems though, in fact, that the people who have to be liberated first are men. They have come out of a tradition of power and in some ways I would say most societies have managed to make men fairly comfortable. They have taken a lot of things, almost too much, for granted. If you look at most families, even in the ordinary affairs of

the house, there are certain things that men take for granted that women do, and the men do other things. You have to begin there. This myth has been built up for so long that it is really going to take us a long time to make men see it. The tendency now among men, for instance, is also a kind of defensiveness – they tend to laugh at the women's liberation movement. They never really want to discuss the subject seriously. They treat it as a joke and I think the mass media has been projecting this very much with the women's liberation, that they never talk about the issue itself. They always talk about the things the women do and usually they talk about the things which are more dramatic, like women taking off their bras and things like that. But this is to me a way of trying to escape the reality, to avoid really facing the issue.

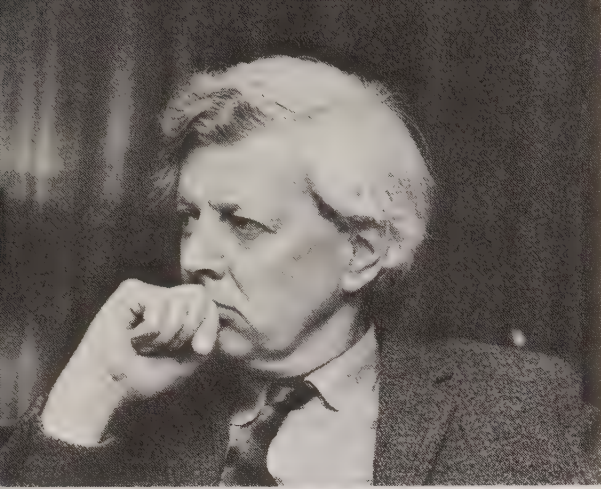
DAVID Yes, that's the basic issue, you see. It's a frightening thing to be changed. But isn't it also an exciting and positive thing? There isn't any doubt at all that if any advance is to be made in this matter, men, in the masculine sense, will have to change their understanding of their identity. Actually, I think it would also mean that – if we can achieve it – that women will discover even more than they know now about their identity. Now it is an impoverishment all round. But precisely because men are being oppressors, it is more their problem than the women's problem. At least from the psychological view, but this may be wrong.

PAMELA It is more their problem, if you like, ultimately, but at the moment it is talked of in terms of the problems of a small group of women. You know the kind of thing – “it is a few people who feel like this and they are probably slightly unhinged anyway” or “they haven't got fulfilment in what they are doing”. But how, if your thesis is true – that it is a men's problem – how do you see the (it has to be persuasiveness, I presume) the persuasiveness of making, or enabling, men to see the importance of what the women are talking about vis-à-vis liberation, for their ultimate good as well? You see what I mean? *To take away the threat and emphasise the promise*, in your own words.

DAVID Yes, that's a very idealistic way of putting it.

PAMELA I am a very idealistic person!

DAVID It does seem to me that that has got to be what you might call the underlying strategy all the time in relation to all the shocks that there will be along the road. In any individual case the right and the wrong isn't ever on only one side simply because a distorted situation means that it does distort everybody. So, the actual business of sorting it out at any one point, or any series of points, will be much more complex than that, which is why it seems to me very important that



one should try and have a few clear, simple views about the overall thing.

PAMELA The difficulty is, actually to identify with some of the women's liberation movements. If you take two of them, for instance, WITCH (Women's International Terrorist Conspiracy from Hell) and SCUM (the Society for Cutting Up Men), then it is very hard to identify with either one of these movements; I think it does no good to go around saying "We hate men..."

BRIGALIA Because we don't!

PAMELA No, some of my best friends are men!

BRIGALIA But you see, Pamela, the point is that when you are dealing with men, it is the same thing as race. You are dealing with someone who has *power* and you cannot at any given time try and persuade someone with power to give up the power. You have to find other methods which are not acceptable to him because he has power. I think this is the whole psychology behind it. If you look at the black militants, their strategy is that you have to put fear into the one who has power, because trying to persuade him to give up his power is being unrealistic. Let's face it, in some ways men have this power over women — some of it is by tradition and a lot of it is just that most of our societies are male-orientated and if you think they are going to give up like that, well... you have to find a way of dealing with them. I think you have to frighten them at some point. Maybe if they think it is for their own good, they will forgive us some of these things, and try to give up the attitude, but seriously, though, it seems *you really have to deal with attitudes.*

Theodore Roszak in
"The Making of a Counter Culture",
Doubleday & Co. 1969

...invidious sexual stereotyping lies
at a deeper level of consciousness
than racial prejudice.



DAVID Yes, I think fear may be inevitable, or necessary, for alerting people to the need for change, but I expect, in the long run, don't you, that fear doesn't actually complete any worthwhile change; it is rather liable to cause regression? So that you have got to work at the other end — on the business of persuasiveness, of ways of showing people the richness of the way that is being commended.

KIRAN I was thinking at this point how liberation for women, if we can use that term, has come about in some countries without any sort of fight or movement at all. Now, for instance, in my own country we have a woman as Prime Minister and she automatically took that post as the one who was the most capable of doing it. There was no fight for it, as a women, and she is not the only one. We have got women in all sorts of different jobs in economics, in medicine; lawyers and educators — and there has never been any fight for that. It seems very funny that in the Third World this sort of thing has come about without any difficulties and that from the West, where you would imagine people to be more enlightened, more educated, that they have to fight for this kind of liberation. That makes it very hard for me, as an Asian, to understand this.

PAMELA Do you think there is any significance in the fact that there are no Christian countries that have women Prime Ministers? For instance, you have the State of Israel, you have India, you have Ceylon. But then when I say that, I also have to say that I think it is very interesting that Israel does have a woman at the top, because the Jewish man prays daily, "Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the Universe, who has not made me a woman." There is some very deep discrimination in that prayer and yet a women has made the top; but in no Christian country, I think, has a woman ever been Prime Minister.

LOUISE There seems to be some sort of feeling of passivity or fatality

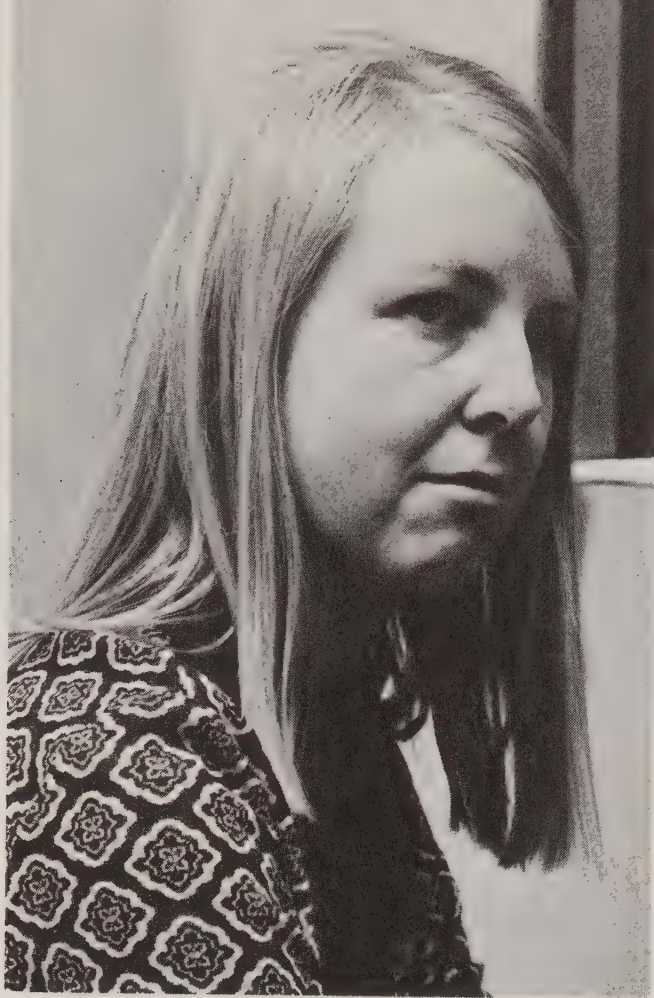


about it, that in our so-called civilised, Western countries there is no need for a woman to struggle to reach the top. It is not done. It is taken for granted that woman is free, equal, whatever you like, in theory, but not in practice.

DAVID Of course, it would be a great pity if everyone became so equal that everyone felt obliged to struggle to reach the top. That's another side of this, too. Perhaps one of the things that could be learnt, eventually, if we could get the inter-dependent situation, is that it is much better and more worthwhile being inter-dependent, enjoying one another, than dominating. There is a whole other set of things here, it seems to me, and this business that we talked about earlier – about woman, life and motherhood – it seems to me that there is something terribly important here; that it really is much more worthwhile to be a source of life than to be running this, that or the other. I know that can be exploited the wrong way.

PAMELA But I would just say there – fine up until now – women have been the source of life, but the way science is moving, how long is this going to be true? I don't want to say test-tube babies tomorrow, but that adds a whole new dimension to this question which Brigalia has raised vis-à-vis Africa.

DAVID Yes, and I think that is one of the reasons we need to get this inter-dependence of men and women and their rôles together straight, as soon as we can, so that we can look at that question without being distorted by saying, well, you are trying to fix motherhood on women. I have a very strong feeling, but it may be again purely psychological, that to put the production of human offspring outside the context of highly personal relationships would be an *extremely inhuman thing*. But it seems to me that we shan't be able to argue that one clearly if we don't first get clear our psychological business about motherhood



and fatherhood. I think this is one of the urgent reasons for getting the man/woman relationship worked out, because we shall be faced, quite likely within twenty years, with the possibility of taking a variant tissue from a woman, sperm from a man, putting them into a bank, matching them, and breeding the baby – or at any rate producing the baby to the point where it can then be put back inside a womb. Now, all this is very frightening and it seems to me that to deal with that problem properly, we don't want to have distorted views of motherhood being used to keep a woman in her place.

PAMELA You say in relation to this issue, that it is inhuman; and a large part of me agrees with you. But I would also say that I think it is equally dehumanising for a woman to produce a succession of babies, just like that.

DAVID Exactly, and that is why you have got to get *that* question straight, so that you don't make a mess of the other one.

LOUISE Perhaps there is another point in this. Let's go to extremes. Once you have rid the woman of her rôle in producing babies, wouldn't she then be free to play a different rôle in society, a more equal rôle with men? Is this not also a method of reducing discrimination between the sexes?

DAVID Yes, it might be. I just don't know how to argue about that. But then I am worried about the business of what humanity is not. It is not, in fact, one generation of men and one generation of women. I mean, it is a generation of men and women who are both the sons and daughters of the preceding generation and the mothers and fathers of the succeeding generation. The thing that I am getting more and more worried about as I read up on the biology/genetic possibilities of engineering-style life and so on, is that all the talk about freedom does appear to be about men as individuals and women as individuals. That seems to me to wrong both, if I could put it, horizontally – I mean we have got to be *us*, not only as individuals, not only horizontally, but at

any rate through the generations. It doesn't seem to me that my humanity consists of me alone.

BRIGALIA This brings me to a theory, David (which might not be very relevant), which is that Western society, with all its technology, has an obvious breakdown about relationships. Everything has become so individualistic that *you* are measured as a person in terms of what *you* can produce, and the whole family system, I wouldn't say for the extended family, is the answer to all our problems. I think if we look at relationships from all the angles of what a person is able to achieve, not only for himself as an individual, be it a man or a woman, but what he is really able to do in terms of the support from several people, with relationships towards several people...

DAVID And a past and a future.

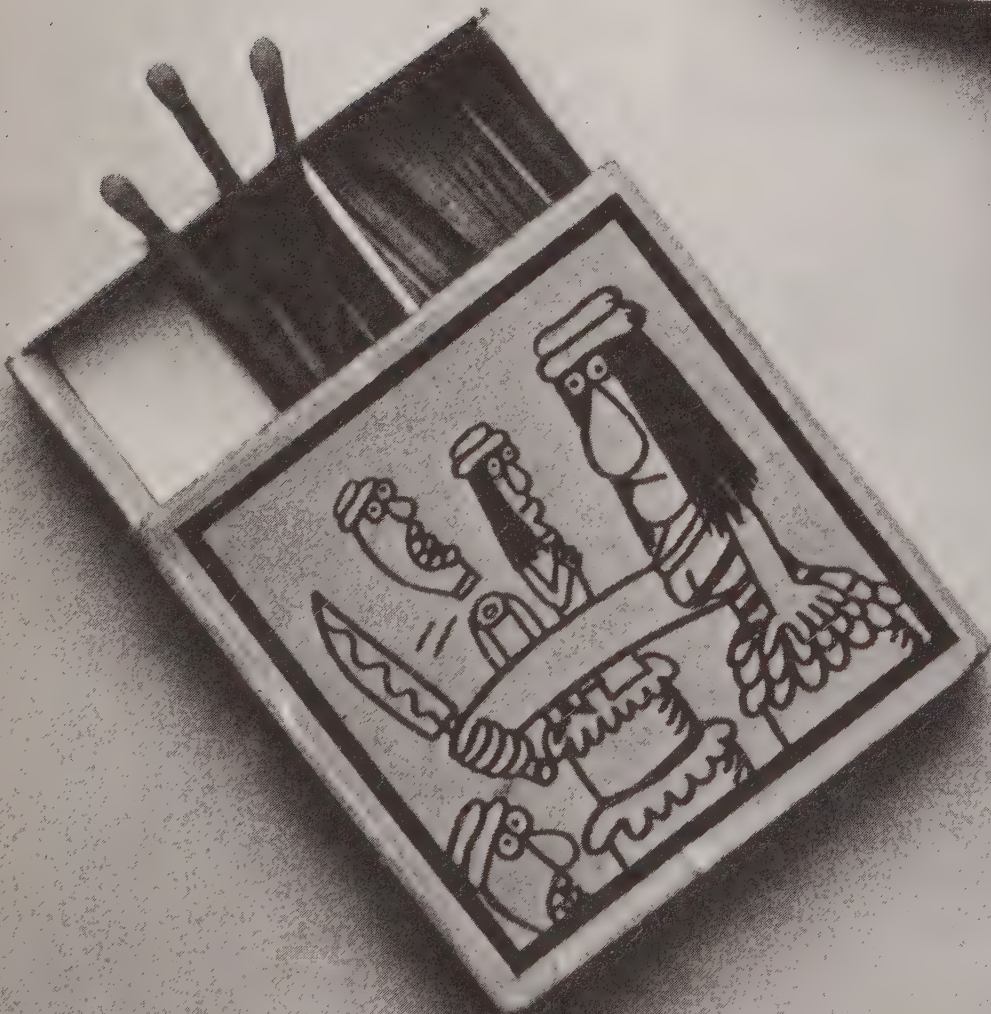
PAMELA How far does anyone think that it was the Industrial Revolution that finally set the seal on discrimination against women? It seems to me that the Industrial Revolution set the West on the course of the consumer society which means that the rôles had to divide. Once the agricultural society in Britain broke down, then the rôles started splitting off, and as the industrial society gathered momentum, so the consumer society gathered momentum, so the rat-race gathered momentum, so we always measured the good in terms of what we could have. You then get this myth building up about the families living happily ever after. It played against further education for girls; it made the majority of girls in our educational system see as their goal marriage and three or four children children – the cosy house and “nice” husband who goes off to work with “nice” clean shirts. How far is this where part of our problem stems from?

DAVID I don't quite know how we could go about answering that question with any



accuracy, but it seems to me that the points you raise are a very good illustration of where I was inclined to kick off from. As soon as you start going into this – this business of the liberation of women – while it is a very pointed and particular question, it is, in fact, a question which raises all the other questions about the nature of our society, the nature of our humanity, and the nature of our future. Isn't that so?





Laila Khaled



What are women doing in the Palestine Revolution?

Just as the Palestinian man has revolted against colonialism and the political repression it represents as well as against social and economic subjugation, so too has the Palestinian woman. In addition, the woman is in revolt against her social status which has hitherto been tying her hands, and against her traditional feminine role.

Hence, as the Palestinian male is a victim of foreign occupation and economic exploitation in a capitalist or feudal society (a fate he shares not only with his fellow Palestinians and Arabs but also with most inhabitants of the Third World), so too the female is victimized, in addition, by her society. She is a victim of man's exploitation.

My purpose here is to clarify the degree of difficulty which the Palestinian woman faces when she joins the revolution. Tradition and custom, together with the economic structure of society, compel the

Stereotypes imprison us. The notoriety Miss Laila Khaled gained in 1970 fixed on her one stereotype – that of a militant fighter in a liberation movement. And how many of us would have slipped into our own stereotype by seeing Laila Khaled as a woman playing a counterfeit rôle in a man's world. In this interview Miss Khaled breaks out of that stereotype and helps us escape our own myth-making.

Liberation for Laila Khaled means more than an immediate political objective: her identification with the liberation of women sheds a new light on her thinking. Her passionate concern for her people is revealed not as a fanatic obsession but as part of a larger commitment to a liberated society. RISK is glad to have had the chance to put these questions to Miss Khaled because her answers have been an education for us and we hope they will be so for others.

Miss Khaled answered these questions in Beirut at the invitation of RISK.

Answers Some Questions

woman to be totally dependant on the man, make it very difficult for the woman to decide to join the revolution and even more difficult to act upon that decision once taken.

The achievements of the Palestinian woman in revolutionary work have been, in comparison to all her handicaps, considerable as well as admirable. They differ, however, from one group to another in the Palestinian resistance depending upon the ideological, social and political tenets of each group.

The woman's role in the Revolution is directly related to the ideological and social stand adopted by a particular political or revolutionary group, while keeping in mind that the liberation of the woman and her participation in the revolution cannot be effective and lasting except through organized channels. As far as the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine is concerned, women enjoy fully equality with men; within the democratic structure of the Front a woman can reach the highest posts of leadership commensurate with her abilities.

Aside from her combat role in which the Palestinian woman of the Front has proved her mettle, she also contributes to the political and social education of the community, and works diligently in the fields of medicine and administration. Whatever work she does, the woman has proved that what held her back in the past was neither her will nor her ability but her subjugation to traditional social bonds and the freedom to play her proper role in a revolutionary organization. The contribution of the women of the Front in educating the illiterate in the camps and in training the girls of the community to use weaving and spinning machines so as to make them productive, has been outstanding.

This does not mean that we have solved the problem of women's liberation. In reality, we have achieved more than our adversaries expected and less than we ourselves hoped. Much time and effort are needed for this kind of struggle. Liberation will no doubt be achieved when a real change takes place in the ownership of the means of production. This will then liberate women economically and so the total liberation of women will become possible, make more sense and produce bigger and more rapid results.

Is the role of the woman in the Palestine Revolution affecting the role and status of the woman in the Arab Society in general? If so, how?

We must distinguish between one class and another. The phrase "Arab woman" is misleading in this context. What Arab woman are we talking about? The villager of South Lebanon or the student at the American University of Beirut? The conservative lady of Damascus or the "liberated" society woman of Beirut's Hamra Street? The Sudanese girl who boldly joins the national movement and works in it or the Bedouin woman of the Yemeni desert? I believe that we must adopt some sort of standard here so that this dialogue can be more meaningful. Since I am committed to the ideology of the P.F.L.P., the standard for me can only be one of classes. Therefore the question can be answered as follows. The Palestinian woman who has joined the revolution is daily giving an example to the Palestinian and Arab woman of how women can be liberated, how they can decide for themselves, how they can be truly free without losing their "honour", and how they can free themselves from man's tyranny and the tyranny of society in general. Such an example does not, of course, achieve immediate results, nor does it produce miracles overnight. At the beginning, the woman who has been subjugated is amazed and then begins to admire this example. By slow degrees, she begins to ponder the lesson which is being repeated and finally the example bears fruit. When we say that Aida or Shadia or Laila or Amina or Nadia are not important in themselves, we mean that

they sow the seeds in our society for the deeper and more through revolution of the future.

How are the attitudes of Arab men changing – if they are – towards the role and place of women in the Arab society since the Palestine Revolution?

We need to recognize that the Arab man, at least with reference to the classes we mentioned, is also exploited and colonized. His own liberation will doubtless contribute to the liberation of the woman who is herself subjected to a double exploitation: she is exploited by those who exploit the man and then is exploited by man himself.

The man will assuredly not abandon his “privileges” easily. But this does not mean that he will not abandon them if every sign points to the fact that such abandonment will not harm his interests in the long run. On the contrary, once these privileges are abandoned, he will find his way to a deeper and more fruitful and happy life. A large part of the subjection of women is present in men’s mental make-up. Thus, an important step on the path of women’s liberation is taken through the liberation of man.

We in the P.F.L.P. maintain that the question of women’s liberation involves more than mere advice or persuasion or encouragement. Rather, it is part and parcel of the total efforts being made to liberate society from all forms of repression and exploitation, politically, economically and socially, and to free it also from obsolete customs and traditions, all of which form the roots of man’s chauvinism.

Many men, especially of the older generation, find a great difficulty in associating “women’s liberation” with anything other than free love, depravity and prostitution. We can understand this difficulty since the flood of western imported films, newspapers, TV shows and magazines picture women’s liberation as if it were the freedom of the slave girl to choose her master. This flood in effect is telling us, “Look, the woman can now freely choose the man she wants to dominate her.” Naturally, we refuse this since the “sexual dimension” in women’s liberation has come to preempt the true significance of the liberation we are fighting for.

The media of a decadent society makes out that this flood of bogus liberation coming to us from the west is the fate of women’s liberation in our own country. This scares not only our men, who are bound by traditions and deep-rooted beliefs inherited from the ages of nomadism and feudalism, but also our women, who feel that this sort of liberation is a travesty of our oriental conservative heritage.

In sum, we are fighting against the tyranny of the old society as well as the new. We are fighting for genuine equality and a genuine liberation. As a result, we find ourselves in an interesting situation. At first, our families put up a stiff resistance. It is extremely difficult to change their mind about women's liberation which to them means "freedom to be depraved". Thus, when a woman leaves her family and throws off its shackles, this is always a moment of drama, pain, unhappiness and anger. With time the family begins, perhaps under the influence of a brother, to realize that their daughter's liberation did not lead, as they feared, to depravity but, on the contrary, gave her a deeper confidence in herself, the respect of her comrades, a strength of character which she lacked and courage in the face of men. All this makes the family gradually abandon their earlier recalcitrance.

What further and what kind of changes do you foresee concerning the changing role of women in the Arab societies? Are other international influences from women's liberation movements affecting Arab women in their changing cultural identity?

I said in answer to the previous question that the battle we are waging with respect to women pits us against, not only a horde of national, class and social enemies, obsolete customs and traditions, etc... but also a sham image of freedom which the west is raining upon us day and night: sexual licence, the tyranny of fashion imposed by a consumer economy, the image of the "baby doll" woman, which turns out to be a new and flashy version of the old tyranny, but this time comes to us with bare breasts and legs. It is an arduous struggle and the question of how best to wage it is time consuming. The initial solution suggested by many is to call for wider and better education. But the problem is not that simple since education itself must be revolutionized, when it is a question of woman's liberation. I do not wish to appear as though I reject all the culture that comes to us from the west, especially as regarding women's liberation. But what I would like to emphasize is that we have, in one way or another, passed beyond the stage at which we stand amazed when faced with the flood of that culture. The key to the future lies in our ability to actualize all the potentialities of revolution in our society, in doing away with all the relationships of production which dominate our society where the roots of repression find a fertile soil. The question of women's liberation cannot be separated from all this, since freedom is one and indivisible. We are certain that the problem of women's liberation can receive only partial solution in a society which permits class or national, racial or religious discrimination. In certain cases, all we can do at present is to persuade, let alone generate the forces that could carry out a revolution along the lines described.

We are watching with great interest the various movements of women's liberation presently raging in the capitalist world. For us, it signals the failure of the capitalist solution to the problem of women's subjection and the beginning of new attempts to find a different path. Naturally, some movements strike us as being suicidally angry, more akin to the frantic attempts of a drowning man to save himself which only lead to a quicker death. We recognize these developments as being a natural part of the attempt to find solutions. But we believe that collective revolutionary action, organized in a progressive manner and designed to undermine all the old relations which constitute the real foundation of our existence, is the only path. Admittedly, it is the more difficult path, but it is the only one.

Beirut, February 19, 1971



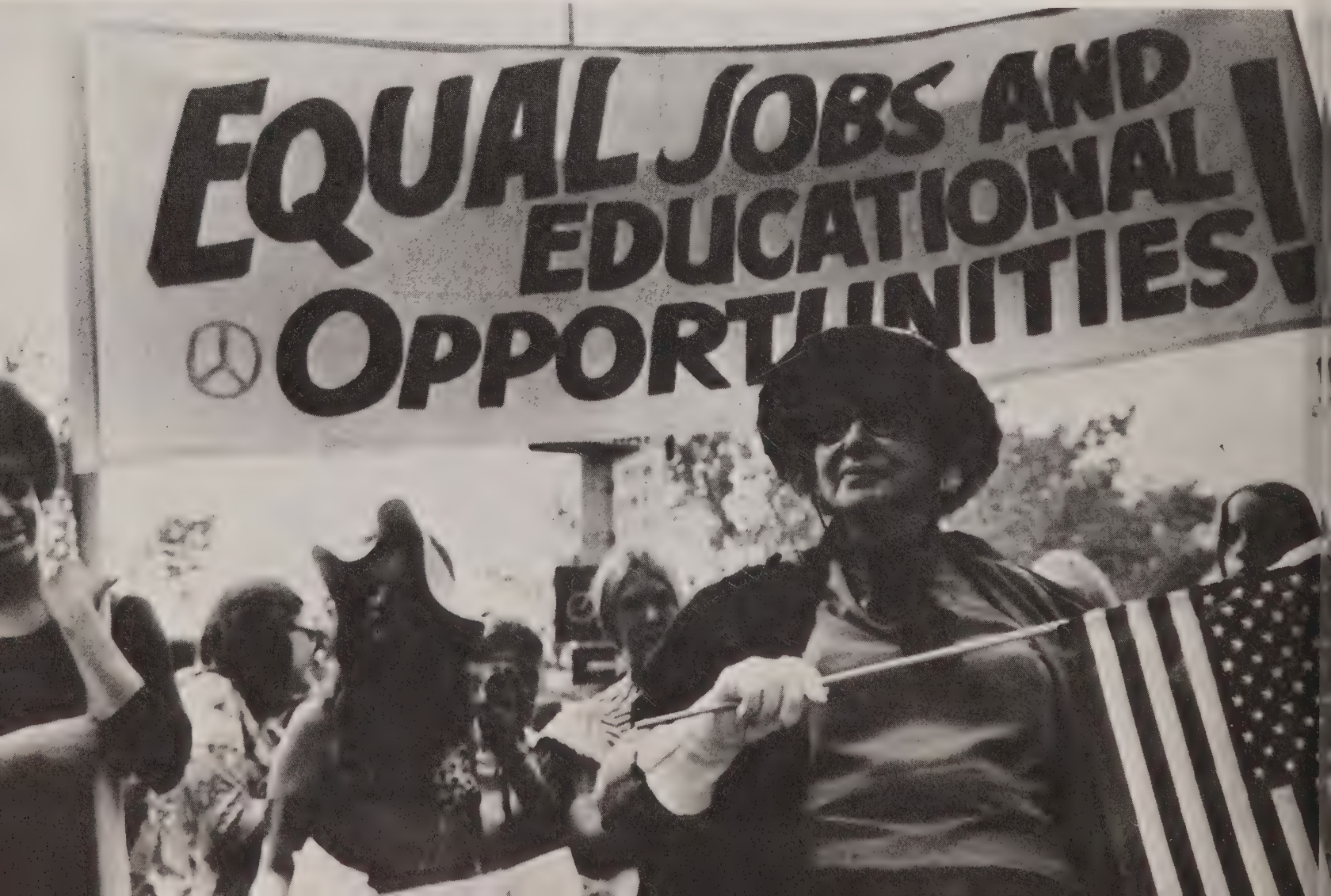
“Just like I always say, dear, – we’ve been a second class sex from the start.”



Liberation without organisation is a false hope: yet organisation itself can become oppressive. This must be one of the constant ambiguities of life. At this time, the movement for the liberation of women takes on more and more the character of organisation. In this article Gabriele Dietrich makes a comparative survey of the methods and forms of organisation of women's movements in Holland and the USA and makes a plea for organisation in Germany.

Gabriele Dietrich

LIBERATING





WOMEN: A COMPARATIVE SURVEY

Why is nothing done about the emancipation of women in Western Germany and West Berlin? Petra Kiphoff in *Die Zeit* (nos. 19, 20, 21, 1970) could only express the problem in the form of a question. She showed that this inaction is *not* due to an improvement in the position of women in this country.

Frau Kiphoff based her article on the "Report of the German Federal Government on the position of Women in Work, Family and Society" published in 1966. This Report fully confirmed what was already known. Nothing has since changed because no-one is sufficiently disturbed about the situation. So it remains that girls do not receive as good an education as boys; that fewer places are open to girls in Universities and training schools; that women are paid less than men for identical work; that married

women who work outside the home usually have to shoulder the two-fold task single-handed; that unmarried women suffer from inferior social status, and their position is still worse if they venture to have children. When making their claims, the trade-unions give last place to the rights of working women. The work done by women outside the home is still regarded as detrimental to the family, and this attitude often destroys the force of the equal rights guaranteed by the Constitution. But nobody bothers about this, nor about the fact that women are chronically under-represented in politics and in social life, that 90 per cent of unskilled adolescents are girls, that if a woman marries she has to take the husband's name, above all, that women are expected to accept a fixed rôle in which what is "typically feminine" is defined by

people (both men and women) interested in opposing emancipation. Petra Kiphoff aptly sums this up: "The question, which talents and qualities are specifically feminine is a pure farce, because what we see today is merely the outcome of centuries of deformation — as is proved by the convenient theories about it. No-one thinks of observing how a tame canary behaves when it escapes from its cage into the park, and then proclaiming as a scientific fact that Nature always intended canaries to live in cages. But a woman who behaves as society expects her to do is still quoted as typical of what woman's nature is."

So one cannot ignore the fact that many aspects of the question are still very bad. Regular reports have been published in *Die Zeit* and in the *Frankfurter Rundschau*; even Springer's *Morgenpost* has brought out a series of articles about "overworked Eve", i.e. the woman with a job. But the defence mechanisms soon begin to function; the middle-class "cosy-home-mentality" of Springer's magazine *Jasmin* give women plenty of hints on how to capture and hold a polygamous, intelligent, sweetly-brutal, superior, successful husband by dolling themselves up as attractive sex-objects and systematically under-developing their own capacities under cover of being gentle, kind and understanding, compensating themselves for their unavoidable inferiority complexes by having a lot of children, or by deliberately enjoying living as parasites. This makes a mockery of everyone, both men and women.

Moreover, women are made to feel insecure by frightening them about the effects of "the pill"; consolation is then meted out to those who find

themselves pregnant against their will by urging them to accept the "victory of Nature" as an unexpected blessing. The defence mechanisms are found even among people who regard themselves as progressive Freudians: they keep harping on the theme of woman's envy of man's sex-organ (trying to explain this attitude by hormones) but refusing to face the real explanation (which is obvious, both historically and logically): that *these* "typical feelings of envy" express woman's protest against a society in which women are at a disadvantage in every sphere.

Partial successes and nominal guarantees of women's rights are deceptive; they merely conceal the fact that the position of women is still deplorable. (In any case the guarantees are quite inadequate, amounting in actual fact to "equal education for all" etc.)

Liberating Men Too

Because this discrimination against women is latent today, it does not receive adequate attention from progressive political groups. The view is constantly expressed that special concerns like the Jewish question or the women's question automatically find their solution in Socialism. In practice it is not automatic at all. Furthermore, the fact is overlooked that the women's question (if expressed in the right form) can be an important factor in "politicising" everybody (including men) in society today. The first aim of the women's movement must be to liberate woman from the inflated rôle of wife and mother, to improve her occupational position, to protect those who are

A woman without ability is normal.

Old Chinese saying

single or alone in life. At the same time, however, men must be made to realize that they will never attain full human maturity until they have stopped regarding themselves as successful supporters of families braving a hostile world. If one reflects on the consequences of this aim it becomes evident that it cannot be achieved by adapting women's rights to suit men: it can be achieved only by completely changing the structures of society.

* * *

Let us now turn our attention to the way in which the aims described above are formulated and pursued in Holland and in the USA. The women's movement in Holland is called *Dolle Mina* (after Wilhelmina Drucker, who fought for women's rights and founded the "Free Women's Movement" in Amsterdam at the end of the 19th century). About two years ago an active group called *Man, Vrouw, Maatschappij* (Men, Women and Society) was formed, but it is less militant and less political in its thinking. The campaigns started in urban localities and took the form of demonstrations demanding day nurseries for children and women's rights in their occupations. For instance, there was a strike in a cigarette factory in the Province of Groningen, in which the question of an increase in wages was to apply only to men, until the women workers there (supported by the women's movement and by their male colleagues, but not by the trade union) insisted on their rights. The organisation began in small groups where women discussed their problems in politics, in their work and in society, formulated their demands, and began to take active steps to draw attention to them. After some weeks a Congress was held to coordinate the work. It drew up the following working

principles: local organisation should be maintained as before, but contact should be ensured between the different areas by means of liaison officers, and a Centre should be set up. Joint campaigns should organise a programme for the liberation of both men and women. In the second number of the series entitled *What Should Be Done? Dolle Mina* summed up the action programme (its slogan being "A rebellious girl is a pearl in the class struggle"). The programme aimed at some simple and yet so easily denied opportunities: the same education for all; the same teaching methods; equal rights at work and in professions; equal rights in marriage status; sexual equality; the improvement of social services and housing conditions; equal right to pensions and new laws on abortion and children born apart from the accepted family pattern.

Politics by Jokes

Extremely energetic methods are employed in order to bring the programme to the attention of the public. For instance, men are kidnapped in cars so that "they might realise for once how it feels". When the editors of women's magazines publish questionable ideas, their premises are occupied by *Dolle Minas*. On one occasion *Dolle Minas* forced entry into a Congress of Gynaecologists in Utrecht and demonstrated by showing the slogan "freedom in one's own body" written across their naked stomachs — as a means of urging the legalisation of abortion. In Amsterdam men's public lavatories are tied up with pink ribbon, in order to point out that there are no similar conveniences for ladies. Before jumping to the conclusion that action of this kind is just a lot of skylarking, one must realise that in Holland public issues

find expression in a different way from most other countries, often in the form of practical jokes. But this does not mean that the issues are regarded as less serious. The forms of action used by the *Minas* resemble those of the *Kabouters* — a group of anarchists who founded the “Orange Free State” in Amsterdam. This is a group opposed to the state, which draws attention to certain crucial points in late-capitalist society: the failure to provide for elderly and aged people in the competitive society; the destruction of old housing areas where the electors voted Communist by means of ingenious “clearance programmes” (for which perfectly good alternatives exist), etc. Admittedly, these forms of action are criticised within the Left party in Holland; nevertheless, they play an important part in influencing public opinion.

As a result of its action, the movement has spread rapidly. Like the *Kabouters*, the *Minas* sometimes present candidates at local elections. On the other hand, they are trying to work independently as a pressure group outside the political parties. The movement would undoubtedly become clearer politically if it were to associate itself more closely with existing socialist groups in Holland, and thus become only part of the political context. However, the programme of the *Minas* (unlike many other groups) aims not only at integrating women into existing society, but at *the human emancipation of men and women* through a complete change in the structures of society. This aim is not supported by the Leftist groups in Holland (or elsewhere) because they often fail to perceive the full political implications of the women’s question.

In contrast to many earlier women’s movements, *Dolle Mina* is aware that there are certain class differences which affect men and women equally and which go even deeper, and that these differences must be eliminated first. Realising this, *Dolle Mina* is now trying to take action accordingly and to stress the need for protecting the rights of the workers, supporting strikes and action in urban localities. *Dolle Mina* wants to make its contribution towards liberating the working class by liberating the working class woman who is completely shackled by her rôle as housewife and who has no opportunity to achieve freedom through work outside the home, because she is subjected to enslaving working conditions and has no adequate training. *Dolle Mina*, therefore, rightly stresses the need to improve labour legislation in general and to provide better opportunities for training.

Oppression in the Churches

One important aspect of the women’s movement in Holland is that it tries to oppose anti-emancipation tendencies in the Churches, which have even more influence there than in Germany. There are signs, however, of a bending in this rigidity. For instance, an independent thinking teacher in Ethics argued on abortion that the decision should rest with the woman concerned and not the Abortion Commission.

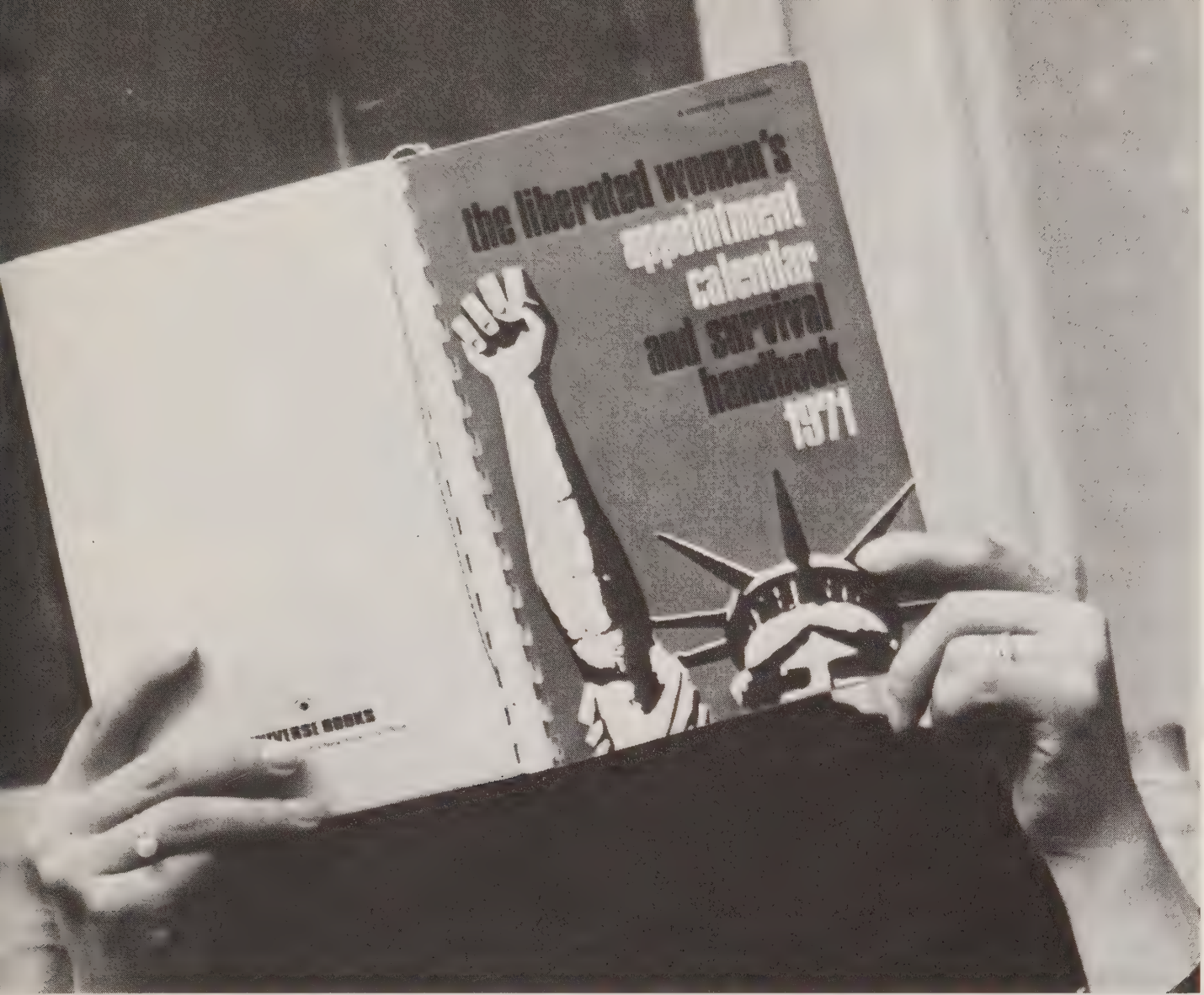
On Palm Sunday, 1970, *Dolle Minas* distributed in the churches of Utrecht a pamphlet which read:

Dear people:

Dolle Mina wishes you a good

Woman is the lesser man.

Alfred Lord Tennyson



morning and asks you to devote a moment during your church worship to the problem of the repression under which the great majority of women suffer.

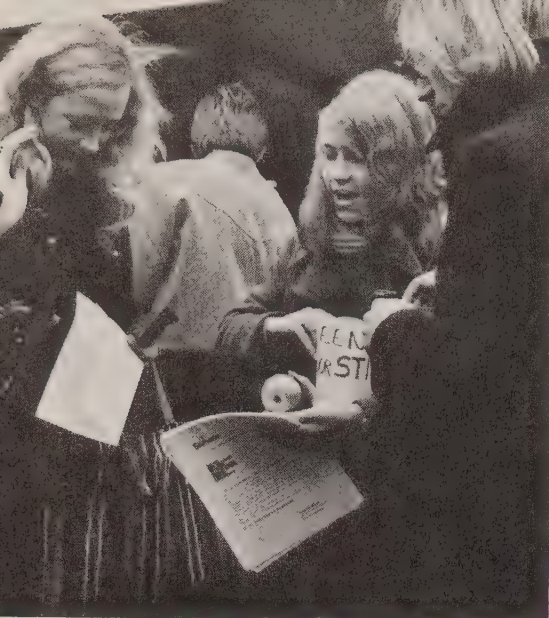
Does not the Christian ethic share responsibility for the fact that women in society today are crushed and repressed? Is it not incumbent upon the Christian Church especially to endeavour to improve the position of women? Why does the Church lay so much stress on the following biblical passages, whereas the attitude of Christ to women was clearly positive?

I Cor. 11: 7-10: Man is the image of God, and the mirror of His glory, whereas woman reflects the glory of man. For man did not originally spring from woman, but woman was made out of man; and man was not created for woman's sake, but woman for the sake of man.

I Cor. 14: 34-36: As in all congregations of God's people, women should not address the meeting. They have no licence to speak, (women are human beings, and are human beings not permitted to speak?) but should keep their place as the law directs (long live the authoritative system!). If there is something they want to know, they can ask their own husbands at home (that will give them something to talk about, provided that they have a husband). It is a shocking thing that a woman should address the congregation.

Eph. 5: 22-23: Wives, be subject to your husbands as to the Lord; for the man is the head of the woman... so must women be subject to their husbands in everything. (When was slavery abolished?)

I Tim. 2: 11-15: A woman must be a learner, listening quietly and with due submission. I (Paul) do not



permit a woman to be a teacher, nor must woman domineer over man; she should be quiet. (The Reverend Bé Buys, Madame Klompé, Madame Golda Meir — return to the kitchen!) For Adam was created first, and Eve afterwards (first come, first served!); and it was not Adam who was deceived; it was the woman who, yielding to deception, fell into sin. Yet she will be saved through motherhood (no hope for those with no children!) — if only women continue in faith, love and holiness, with a sober mind. (Long may women continue to live under the tutelage of men!)

I Peter 3: 5-7 ... by submission to their husbands. Such was Sarah, who obeyed Abraham and called him 'my master'... In the same way, you husbands must conduct your married life with understanding, because... the woman's body is weaker.

Dolle Mina asks... why the leadership of the Churches is men's business. *Dolle Mina* calls for proper exegesis of the passages in which Peter and Paul speak of women, because they are extremely puzzling to any modern woman who wants to live truly and sincerely, in accordance with her faith.

In *Dolle Mina's* opinion this problem cannot be dismissed with a shrug of the shoulders, accompanied by the remark, "We don't take the Bible so literally any more."

Does the Church want to help women to liberation, or does it want to hold them back?

Whether the statement "We are really getting dangerous" (heading in *Vrouw*, 28.1.70) will one day become a reality depends on the increasing politicising of the women's movement. At any rate the political statements in the programme reveal the present trend. The forms of action cannot all be applied in Germany, but they may stimulate thinking.

The women's movement in Holland is not hostile to men; it has some men as active members. It is not opposed to marriage as such, but it does oppose the traditional type of marriage as a social opiate. The reason for this attitude is, of course, primarily the awareness that men and women are all involved in the class struggle. This fact leads to two further conclusions: first, that the movement could have a basis in broader sections of the "normal population" than the American movement can; secondly, that the discrimination against women (especially ideologically) is not as strong in Holland as it is in the USA. What line a German movement would assume would be shown in practice.

* * *

The need for the American women's movement, and at the same time the limitations of its effectiveness, were brought home to us by the press at the



A Dolle Mina demonstration.



"Where are the unmarried fathers?"



Signs read: "women's talents wasted in the kitchen"; "why are legal children better?"



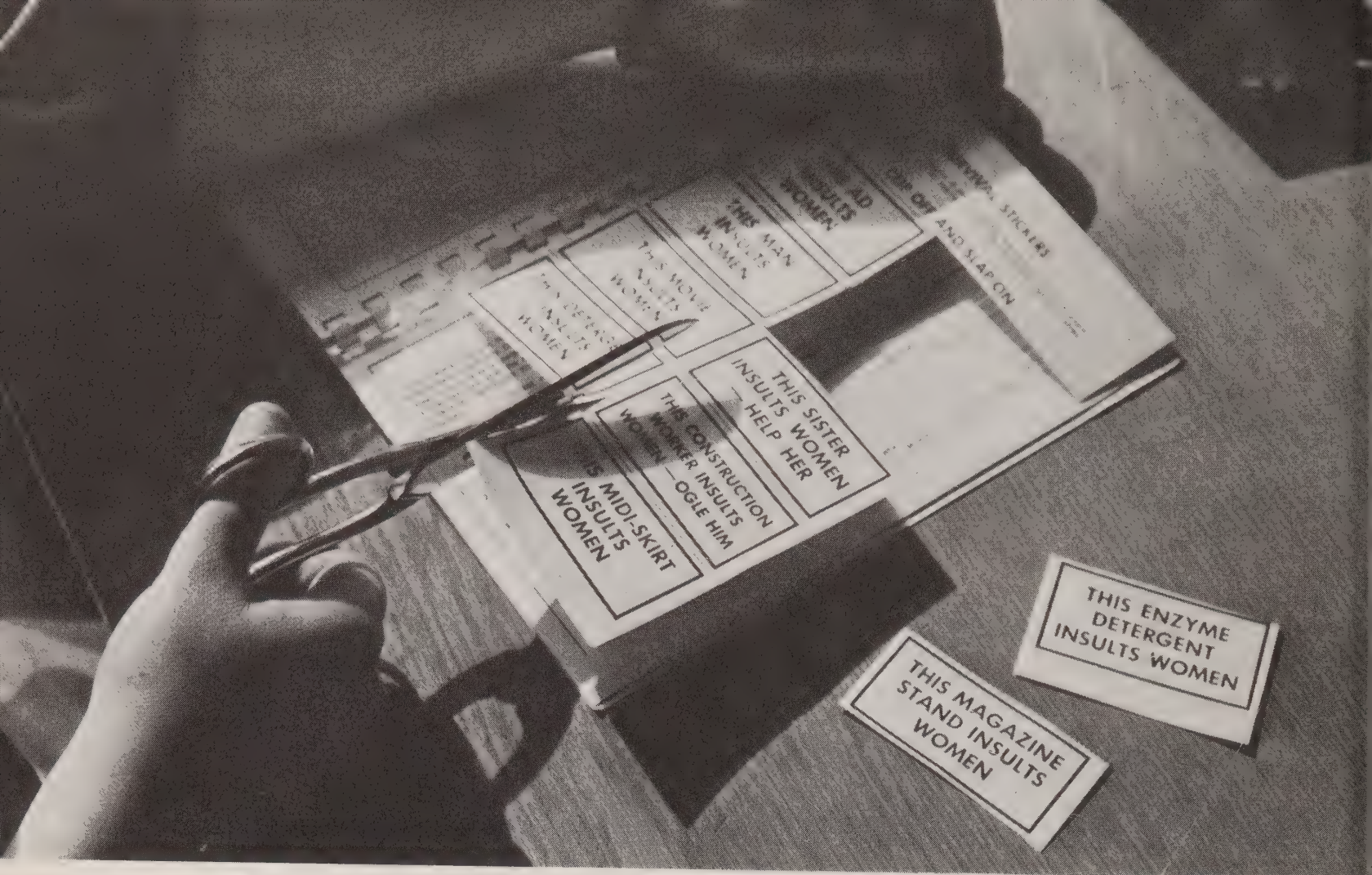
In front of the American Embassy.

beginning of August. When Dr. Patsy T. Mink, a woman lawyer who is parliamentary representative for Hawaii, wanted the women's question to be placed on the agenda in April 1970, she was violently attacked by Dr. Edgar F. Berman who hastily invented a theory about the effect of hormones making women unsuitable for leading positions. The Committee rejected the request to give priority to the women's question. However, Berman's remarks created a scandal which lasted for months. He was contradicted by doctors, politicians and advocates of women's rights.

Finally even his own wife (who is Director of a firm of estate agents and who owns a newspaper) dissociated herself from the surprising views of her husband. When his term of office came to an end he retired, so as not to injure his party. However, he stuck to what he had said, to the joy of many people with similar notions.

In the meantime, fifty years after women obtained the vote, at the beginning of August the American Congress in Washington passed (by 350 votes to 15) an additional clause to the Constitution, guaranteeing full equality of rights to women. This





Article still has to receive the approval of the Senate and the agreement of two-thirds of the States. Nevertheless, Mr. Celler (the Chairman of the Committee which drafted the clause) said he thought the resolution was premature and he summed up his opposition in the profound remark, "The difference between men and women is, after all, greater than that between a brown horse-chestnut and a chestnut-brown horse." Considerable struggles will certainly take place before the measure (which has now been legally recognised) is carried into effect.

How difficult it is to wage struggles of this kind was shown on the 26th August, 1970, the 50th anniversary of the date when women received the vote; the women's freedom groups (especially the National Organisation for Women started by Betty Friedan) announced that on that day women would all be on strike. *All* women were asked to support the strike, by refusing to work in their jobs or as housewives. Mothers were urged to deposit their children in their

husbands' offices and go off. But fear of losing their own jobs, or of their husbands losing theirs, prevented everyone from participating in the strike. However, in New York, Betty Friedan succeeded in enlisting 40,000 demonstrators.

American Myths

The European observer will easily tend to interpret the failure of the strike as a sign of weakness in the American women's movement, due to the fact that American women do already enjoy a great deal of freedom, so that the movement is superfluous. The legend that America is a paradise for women is very tenacious, and is kept alive by the traditional women's associations, who even ask whether what is needed today is not rather a movement to liberate American men. But hitherto the influence of American women has not been due to the fact they have opportunities for taking their own decisions and developing as working persons with their own

political ideas; it has depended rather on their aggressive attitude, due to their own frustration at being regarded as merely housewives and mothers. Whether the new women's movement will succeed in turning this aggressive energy into a struggle to destroy the old rôles, and thus to liberate both men and women, or whether it will merely develop into an anti-men campaign (which does not really emancipate women) remains to be seen.

It is almost impossible to estimate the numerical strength of the Women's Liberation Movement. In the spring of 1970 the figure was estimated at about 100,000 organised women in over 400 American towns. But the interest in the women's movement spreads so rapidly that new groups are constantly being formed, and these figures are no longer valid. The women respond so quickly because "Women's Liberation is simply organised anger against real oppression." (Charlotte Bunch-Weeks, Washington, in the pamphlet *A Broom of one's own*). The different groups take action in different ways, but it is true to say of the American women's movement, that it deliberately continues the historic struggle of the suffragettes — the first women to fight for the vote.

The word "suffragette" is no longer pejorative, it is rather a title of honour. At the same time the movement undertakes investigations to see why the struggle for equal rights had no real effect in practice; women were to a large extent ignored. The main mistakes are recognised to be the following: the isolation of the women's question from the general social context, separation of women's emancipation from that of other oppressed groups (like the black Americans) and failure to analyse the

reasons held by those who opposed their emancipation. So the two big questions which are being examined (side by side with the daily work of the organisation) are: (i) the connection between the women's question and the class struggle; (ii) the connection between "sexism" and "racism".

Sexism: an older racism

Charlotte Bunch-Weeks outlines the first of these questions as follows: "We have a 'sexist' society, i.e. a society which is dominated by men. In every aspect of daily life our society assumes that men are superior and women inferior; it creates a lower status, an inferior caste consisting of women. A woman belongs to her caste because of her sex and her birth, and this defines the limits of her life and the nature of her relationships with people outside her caste, namely men. The special limits differ in different classes, but in every class women are given lower status than men, and forced to play an inferior rôle. No consensus has yet been reached concerning the original causes of sexism, but it is clear that capitalism in the USA (like many other societies in the past) takes advantage of sexist ideas and perpetuates them for its own ends."

The women's movement opposes this situation with a threefold programme: 1) influencing people's mentality; 2) eliminating the dependence of women; 3) challenging and opposing sexist institutions. Its aim is to rouse the groups which suffer from oppression most, namely the working class women and the coloured women, to fight for their own liberation.

Here the white, middle class women's liberation movement encounters one of its greatest difficulties. It tries to

Out of 62,519 undergraduates admitted to British Universities in 1970, only 19,909 were girls.

break down the barriers of class by stressing the solidarity of all women as an inferior caste, but it does not always succeed.

All the work is done in small groups with their own organisation, and proceeds through exchange of experience to analysis. In the meantime, a tremendous number of pamphlets are constantly being published, as well as periodicals and books. In order to influence and inform people, lecture courses are given by former suffragettes on the historical background of the movement, plays are produced in theatres, and spectacular forms of action are undertaken similar to those of the *Minas* in Holland. Women's magazines are criticised and their premises occupied, a discussion is organised on television with *Playboy* chief, Hefner, etc.. Simultaneously a great deal of practical work is going on. Children's day-nurseries are

organised, children's books are written which are free from repressive ideas, medical care is arranged (especially gynaecological), the struggle continues for free birth-control and abortion, courses in self-defence are held, karate courses, as well as courses in self-help (e.g. changing tyres). Campaigns are organised demanding equal education and equal training, equal rights at work, fair wages, salaries for housewives, part-time work for women and for men; systematic use is made of political agitation (free-speech, fund-raising, work on pamphlets and papers, behaviour when dealing with the police, etc.).

The Problem of Men

Unlike the women's movement in Holland, the American women's groups cooperate very little with men, if at all.



The separation between women and the world of men is often mainly pragmatic: both men and women have adopted certain forms of behaviour which have become second nature to them, and they *cannot* behave differently. If men are admitted to the women's groups they immediately begin to dominate the organisation and the discussion, while the women revert to a passive attitude. Separation from men seems to be essential, if women are to gain experience of standing on their own feet; only then, slowly and carefully, can cooperation with men be tried out at occasional meetings (at which the men help with the cooking and in looking after the babies).

The "Feminists" have turned the struggle against men into a real ideology in their different groups. Their theories (derived from Anne Koedt, Valerie Salons and Ti-Grace Atkinson) go so far as to proclaim that women and men do not need to live together at all in the age of artificial insemination! It would be easy to write off these ideas as pathological, without realising that they are the logical reaction against a pathological society which regards the family nucleus and woman's rôle as being confined to being housewife and mother as natural, laid down by the divine order, and the only things worth having. The Feminists attack many of the sore points in society today; by urging women to cooperate together ("sisterhood"), by opposing discrimination against homosexuals, by

strict group discipline and group solidarity, and by opposing competition, the rat-race for success, clichés concerning the rôle of woman and certain psychiatrists who try to persuade women to accept their lot. It cannot be expected that the Feminists will enlist a great number of supporters; the women's movement as a whole is not opposed to marriage and the family as such, but merely to their traditional repressive forms. In the women's movements the Feminists correspond to "black chauvinism" in the racial movement; they act as a catalyst in clarifying people's thinking, however biased and questionable their ideas may be.

The success of the American women's movement will depend on whether it breaks away from the limits of white middle class isolation, and really cooperates effectively with the oppressed minorities in American society (especially the blacks). Only then will the women's movement be able to counter criticism from the Left, and to play an effective part in the political work of the groups concerned. However, the women's movement in America does already today identify itself and cooperate with groups working for social aims more closely than is the case in Holland.

The Political Factor

One form of action, which can be regarded as a genuine break-through towards political participation, deserves

In a total of 144 American readers examined (from fifteen reading series and ranging from primer to sixth grade level), there are 881 "amusing and exciting" stories centering round boys to 344 stories centering round girls. This represents 72% boy-oriented stories to cater for 49% of small boys in the elementary school population.

Sex Rôle Stereotyping in Elementary School Readers,
A report compiled by the Central New Jersey Chapter
of the National Organization for Women, USA,
November 29, 1970

brief mention. Some women's groups, especially in New York, have started a campaign with the slogan "Free Joan Bird!" Joan Bird is a nurse (now 21 years of age) who played an active part in the Black Panther Movement, was arrested on questionable charges, and has since been kept in prison for over 18 months, where she has been subjected to ill-treatment. As in the case of several Black Panthers, the sum required for her release on bail was 100,000 dollars. The women's groups are now trying to release their "black sister" by raising funds, street-publicity, theatre productions, demonstrations, pamphlets and agitation. With the slogans "One dollar from a hundred thousand people" and "We free her, she frees us" they are learning to re-think their own situation as well as that of the black minority, and their importance for American society.

Special attention should be paid to the flood of publications available everywhere. The political paper *Leviathan* (New York, San Francisco) publishes regular material on the women's question. In June 1969 it published a very important article on the position of the working class woman by Kathy McAfee and Myrna Wood; in May 1970 it devoted the whole number to the women's question. In the same way the Leftist paper *Rat* (published in New York) has turned its attention to this question, since its editorship was freed from "male chauvinism" and taken over by emancipated women. The amount of paper devoted to women's liberation is constantly increasing.

All these publications have one striking feature in common: they are all deeply concerned about the whole political situation, especially about Vietnam and about the racial question; furthermore, they are all on a fairly high level of thinking. In addition to current political information they contain

historical articles, for instance on the connection and the separation between the movement for women's rights and the movement to abolish slavery; there are articles on ideology which try to discover why the women's question is not automatically solved in the class struggle; and there are articles which try to analyse certain clearly-defined social evils, in order to show what steps should be taken to remedy them. For instance, they do not simply join in the general demand for children's day-nurseries; they carefully investigated to see under what circumstances the workers become increasingly dependent upon their employers through the setting up of day-nurseries at factories, what opportunities the workers should be given to have a voice in the running of such day-nurseries, what alternatives to factory day-nurseries might be recommended, what educational concepts must be observed in them without fail, etc..

Lastly, the reports from the international women's movement have an important influence, especially those concerning the rôle of women in revolution — for instance in Cuba and Vietnam. Reports of this kind strengthen the conviction that genuine alternatives do exist to the deplorable position of women in American society.

The women's movement in America exercises very little influence on other movements — even less than in Holland. One example is its political involvement. (However, the women's movement has had important repercussions on existing political organisations, such as the Young Lords in Puerto Rico who included the women's question in their programme, and have since then practised far better cooperation between men and women within their own Party.)

It will take a very long time to achieve anything similar in Germany. Experiments and discussions about "the

wider family” and about “avoiding authoritarianism in children’s education” provide a starting point, a first step towards the real liberation of women. The rest is a matter for women to organise themselves and for political agitation. *The struggle will not be successful unless it goes hand in hand with a critical analysis of modern work and of economic life.* The capitalist efficiency society produces men who come home in the evening to a clean, tidy home and sink onto the sofa, while the women resign

themselves all too easily to passive acquiescence, a consumer attitude, to being dominated and bossed about, and to reproduction. As rationalisation becomes increasingly possible, we must work out a new concept of work, of the division of labour, of self-fulfilment, of productivity, of child education, of educational opportunities, so that both men and women can be liberated from their fixed traditional rôles. Practical experience will show in what specific ways this must be done in Germany.

Books and Articles

Books

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|------------------------------|---|
| Sarah Bentley Doely (Editor) | <i>Women’s Liberation and the Church</i>
New York, Association Press, 1970 |
| Kate Millet | <i>Sexual Politics</i>
New York, Doubleday & Co., 1970 |
| Mary Daly | <i>The Church and the Second Sex</i>
New York, Harper & Row, 1968 |
| Margaret Sittler Ermarth | <i>Adam’s Fractured Rib</i>
Philadelphia, Fortress Press, 1970 |
| Mary Lou Thompson (Editor) | <i>Voices of the New Feminism</i>
Boston 1970, Beacon Press |

Magazines and Articles

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|-------------------------------------|---|
| “On the Liberation of Women” | <i>Motive</i> , March-April 1969 |
| “Growing Up A Woman” | Kathy Mullern and Jennifer Garden
<i>Christianity and Crisis</i> , October 5, 1970 |
| Profiles — Founding Cadre | Jane Kramer
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UNSCIENTIFIC POSTSCRIPT

*Is Scandinavia a women's paradise?
Does the absence of legal discrimination
allow women to be people?
The answer seems to be NO.
Anna Marie Aagaard guides us through
some of the undisclosed factors and
shows how difficult these are to overcome.*

by Anna Marie Aagaard



THE PREHISTORIC ARGUMENT

THE PRIMEVAL WOMAN - "Why can't I go out too
see the world?"

THE PRIMEVAL MAN - "Because you can't. Women
proper sphere is the Cave"

To begin with I read some old stuff. It was funny!

*It is a hard and hateful thing to see proud men, not to speak of
enduring them. But it is annoying and impossible to suffer
proud women, because in general Nature has given men proud
and high spirits, while it has made women humble in character
and submissive, more apt for delicate things than for ruling.
Therefore, it should not be surprising if God's wrath is swifter
and the sentence more severe against proud women whenever it
happens that they surpass the boundaries of their weakness.*

(Boccaccio, Concerning Famous Women)

Indeed, the Flood seems to have been the result of a female transgression
of this natural order:

*He then commanded Noah to sit beside the door of the ark...
according to God's orders, if the male lorded it over the female
of his own kind, both were admitted, but not otherwise... He
gave these orders because it was no longer men alone that
committed bestiality... females frequently lorded it over males.*

(Hebrew Myths — The Book of Genesis)

Then I turned to some more recent utterances on the eternal subject —
and it wasn't funny at all!

*The influence of women on events is exerted primarily in their
role as wives and mothers, to say nothing of aunts and*

grandmothers. Even in employment outside the home, with the exception of schools and hospitals, this influence usually works by sustaining or inspiring the male... the most superficial knowledge of the way in which the affairs of Government, industry and commerce are conducted makes this quite plain. What infuriates a rather esoteric group of women is that they want to exert power both through men and also in their own right, and that this is almost impossible.

(Sir John Newsom, 1964.

Quoted from Eva Figes: Patriarchal Attitudes)

As an antidote to all this, I bought a collection of essays. The latest news from the University left in Western Europe:

The political self-consciousness and the political organization of women... implies the abolition of the bourgeois separation between private life and society-related life. It is necessary to understand the suppression in the private sphere not as a private, but as a political / economic suppression. Private life must be changed in quality, and this change must be understood as a political action. Such action belongs to the cultural revolution and is part of the "class struggle".

(SDS Delegiertenkonferenz, September 1968)

And once more I came to agree with "old" Havelock Ellis:

We have to recognise that our present knowledge of men and women cannot tell us what they might be or what they ought to be, but what they actually are, under the conditions of civilisation.

The conditions of civilisation

In Scandinavia this means that we have got women truck drivers, women pastors, as well as male nurses and male hair-stylists. You meet unmarried fathers with a household and children, as well as unmarried mothers. The phrase: he is the husband of Mrs. So-and-so, is as "natural" as: she is the wife of Mr. So-and-so. We have got equal rights for both sexes in all sectors of public life, in education – higher as well as lower and equal rights not only on paper and in principle, but to a great extent in practice also.

There are problems concerning equal wages in some labour unions, problems concerning part-time jobs; there is a serious lack of kindergartens and a too high percentage of women drop out of university...

But on the whole a Scandinavian woman *enjoys* all the rights the blue-stockings fought for. They are no longer “pie in the sky”. Without enduring too much discrimination in taxation you may even believe in outdated sociological patterns and be a full-time, male or female, housewife.

Even the claims of the red-stockings are to some extent not mere utopia. It is possible to leave traditional family structures and become a member of a community without losing “social status”. No public opinion claims that a woman must enjoy educating children. It is possible both to be married and to create a life of your own, including economic independence, without being regarded as a female monster. You may be braless, topless and even admit that you have a sex-life without being treated as a neurotic. Concerning all these things and women’s liberation movements in general there is only one thing to say: “honi soit qui mal y pense” and add that few attitudes are more loathsome than to enjoy all the results of other women’s fights and drowsily behave like a feudal queen.

But:

- even with equal rights in education and public life,
- even if there have been serious and successful attacks on the inherited roles of the two sexes,
- even if the average Danish male is more than tired of pornography and rebels against one of the most persistent discriminations – the treatment of women as sex-objects,

even so, Scandinavia is not at all a paradise. There are lots of subtle discriminations. Here I shall only try to describe one of the more basic ones.

John Locke seems to have been the first philosopher who distinguished between the concepts man/woman and person. In everyday talk we don’t think so much of logical distinctions, and more often than not we use the words man/woman and person as synonyms. But these concepts are not always identical. Even if it can be demonstrated that most men/women are persons, it does not follow that most persons are men/women. In everyday talk we speak about a “man” or a “woman”. This usage is based upon biological criteria. The distinction between man/woman and person, however, is also relevant in everyday talk. When we speak about laws and morals, about rights, responsibility and free will, we speak about persons. Persons must have a body in some way or another, because it belongs to the concept ‘person’ that a person must be identifiable, but, nevertheless, when we deal with rights and responsibility we primarily speak about a being (with whatever bodily status), able to act freely and therefore subject to moral and juridical judgement.

A legal person is any subject matter other than a human being to which the law attributes personality... So far as legal theory

is concerned, a person is any being whom the law regards as capable of rights or duties. A being that is so capable is a person whether a human being or not, and no being that is not so capable is a person, even though he be a man. Persons are the substances of which rights and duties are attributes.

(Salmond, Jurisprudence)

Thus it is irrelevant, in principle, for our judgement of people's acts whether the acting person is a man or a woman. **We act primarily as persons, not as beings with certain biological attributes.**

This, then, is the principle – and with it the more or less commonly accepted insights of modern linguistic philosophy. To take this further, however, we know that most actions cannot be judged outside their context. We don't look upon the neglect of children, for example, in the same way when we deal with a mentally ill mother as when we deal with a mother who is "only" lazy. The mere fact that the acting person is a woman is irrelevant for our judgement; ethically, what is relevant is "a woman in such and such circumstances". The problem now is: whether it is nevertheless possible that the mere fact that the acting person is a woman, could be one of the circumstances which might influence our judgement of actions?

Biological factors have relevance when we speak about ethically neutral actions. A sentence like: This person could not climb the mountain, *might* imply a moral judgement – namely when we speak about a man (he could have physical strength, but is too fat, smokes too much, etc.). When we speak about a woman nobody expects the sentence to imply a moral judgement (she has not got the physical strength).

In our attitudes and in our everyday talk in our "liberated" societies, biological factors are also made relevant, however, when we speak about actions which involve ethics:

She acted without thinking of the consequences...

She interrupted without having the foggiest idea about the economic development...

That was a hysterical statement...

... but, she is a woman (or better still!), she is a real woman.

These are only obvious examples of a general attitude:- **the biological factor is used as a moral excuse.** The hidden logic of such statements and such attitudes is this: in general there is no excuse for acting without thinking of the consequences or the implications of your actions, but "being a woman" overrules responsibility.

We neglect the logical distinction between a woman and a person, and the result is that women's actions are often regarded as less than actions for which a person (even during menstruation and in her forties) is responsible. Actions are connected with persons and responsibility. Reactions are totally determined by biology.

The subtle, but real and felt discrimination arises where you are excused *because* you are a woman and considered to be determined by biology to such an extent that your actions must be regarded as mere reactions to biological factors.

The completely opposite attitude, however, also creates difficulties. You act as a person and you are treated accordingly in daily life, that is, you are responsible for your deeds and your judgements – even the silliest ones made on your most “off” days in the month. Thus, the attitude is that if women wish to hold positions of responsibility, to exercise power in society, to earn salaries as high as men’s and so on: in short, if women wish to be treated as *persons*, then they had better observe the “rules of the game” and not use their biological make-up as an excuse for bad decisions or lack of effectiveness. In other words, a woman’s actions are conditioned in many ways, but biological factors should in no way influence the judgement of a woman’s work and behaviour. A capitalistic Western world, made by persons who are men, cannot afford to use the biological conditions under which certain other persons have to act as an excuse for mildness and a reason for change, so that it might become easier for a woman to keep her self-respect as a person.

Not only life during working hours, but our whole social life (church, education, etc.) is impregnated with this lack of serious consideration of the conditions under which women act – you must always be on top of yourself or we drop you, tell you that you cannot even think, etc. And the reasons for such attitudes are legion, and obvious:

- the values of Western society were created by persons who never had to act under certain biological conditions;
- there exists a lack of knowledge among both men and women of those biological processes which determine “being a woman”;
- taboos (religious) surround everything connected with the creation of life.

The growing insights into the conditions under which one half of the human family has to act, as responsible persons, have not counted as reasons for changing the values of our societies and our style of life. We have taken the easy way out: chosen to excuse women for being women, and thereby deprived them of being persons, of being responsible, under all conditions.

This kind of discrimination cannot be dealt with in any easy way. It takes a basic change of society to arrive at treating women as persons – but as persons who are women.

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Contributors

Anna Marie Aagaard is an Associate Professor in the Faculty of Theology, University of Aarhus, Denmark. **Gabriele Dietrich** is a German who has written on women's liberation for the press. **Davida Foy Crabtree** is Vice-President-At-Large of the National Council of Churches in the United States. **Laila Khaled** is a member of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine. **Josina Machel** is a political commissar in the Women's Detachment of FRELIMO (Frente de Libertação de Mozambique).

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